

King Henry
FALSTAFF'S WEDDING,

A

COMEDY:

AS IT IS ACTED

AT THE THEATRE ROYAL

IN DRURY-LANE.

BEING A SEQUEL TO

THE SECOND PART OF THE PLAY OF

KING HENRY THE FOURTH.

WRITTEN IN IMITATION OF SHAKESPEARE,

BY W. KENRICK.

In magnis voluisse sat est.

DUBLIN:

Printed for JAMES WILLIAMS, in Skinner-row.
MDCCLXVI.



TO MR. QUIN,

IN RETURN FOR THE FREQUENT PLEASURE
RECEIVED,

BY HIS REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTER

OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF;

A PLEASURE WHOSE REMEMBRANCE IS AS
GRATEFUL

AS SUCH REMEMBRANCE IS INDELIBLE;

THIS ATTEMPT,

TO COPY THE GREAT ORIGINAL

WHICH HE EXHIBITED ON THE STAGE,

IS INSCRIBED,

AS AN IMPERFECT TRIBUTE TO PERFECT MERIT.

BY THE AUTHOR.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

TH E remarkable ill success of preceding imitators of Shakespeare *, would certainly have deterred the present writer from renewing the attempt, were he to be easily diverted from a favourite object by the difficulties attending its pursuit. But, having long since adopted the Motto, *In magnis voluisse sat est*, the arduousness of the task is only an additional incentive to his perseverance.

As to the present performance, however, it must not be supposed that he presumes to think it will in the smallest degree contribute to deprive his great master of that honour, which is so justly and peculiarly his due; viz. that of being truly *inimitable*. Had there been the least room, indeed, for suspecting the author of such a design, the profound reverence and esteem which he bears to the memory of SHAKESPEARE, would have induced him rather to commit his manuscript to the flames than to the press: for, however roughly he may have cropt the bays, which have been prostituted to grace the temples of the living, he will never deface, with unhallowed hand, the laurelled butts of the dead.

The truth is, this little piece was a juvenile performance, written so long ago as the year 1751, when the author was young and giddy enough to amuse himself in a stuffed doublet, before a private audience, with an attempt at a personal representation of the humours of Sir John Falstaff. How he performed his part was then, and is now, of no consequence; how far he might enter into the spirit of his author, may possibly be gathered from a perusal of the following sheets, containing the re-

* A very eminent writer hath severely ridiculed these imitations, by saying that the best he ever saw, had copied Shakespeare only in the following line.

And so good morrow to you, good master lieutenant.

The P R E F A C E.

sult of those impressions, which the striking excellencies of the character then left on his mind.

Were the author possessed of that ridiculous mock-modesty, on which it is the fashion for modern authors to pique themselves, he might affect to treat this work as the poultry *jeu d'esprit* of his boyish days, unworthy of his present notice, or that of the publick. But, if he really thought it so, he would have acted otherwise with regard to its publication: for though he should be sorry the present object of his studies were not more useful and important, yet he must frankly own that, if he was ashamed of having written this little performance, he should be equally ashamed of offering it to the publick. An hour's entertainment, for a reader of taste and judgment, is not always at hand, much less concomitant with novelty. If the writer, therefore, by having agreeably amused himself a few days, may contribute to one hour's amusement of such a reader, it is the utmost he expects or desires from this publication.

It is presumed, also, that his favourable opinion of it, will not be thought altogether founded on self-sufficiency, when the reader is informed that one of the best judges of Shakspeare now living, has declared it to contain "*a very good imitation of Shakspeare, particularly in the character of Falstaff.*"

This was Mr. GARRICK; whose letter now lies before me — not a letter written to the author (for in this polite and complimenting age such testimony might justly be deemed equivocal) but a letter written on this subject above six years ago, to one of Mr. G's acquaintance, whom the author neither knows, nor hath ever seen*.

Several of the writer's friends, indeed, have conceived this piece might be brought with success on the stage; for which, however, it never was planned nor intended†; having

* R. B. Esq; as the author was informed by capt. M——, who gave him Mr. G's letter.

† The author being so far of opinion with Dr. Johnson, that, notwithstanding the many excellencies with which Shakspeare's plays abound, there is not one of them perhaps, which, if we take it all together, would go down with an audience, if represented as a new performance. — Mr. Garrick appeared also to be of the same opinion; observing

having been written as a kind of poetical exercise, which the author had prescribed to himself, and of which he was by no means vain; well knowing that an indifferent writer may sometimes be lucky in his imitation of the best.

That he was sincere in these sentiments, he thinks sufficiently evinced by keeping his piece in manuscript nine years, and even permitting it to remain six years in the bookseller's warehouse after it was printed. Nor would it even now have made its appearance, might it not serve in some measure to corroborate what the author had elsewhere asserted, with regard to his *Review of Dr. Johnson's Shakespeare*, viz. that that editor must impute the severe chastisement he hath received, not to any motives of personal resentment against him, but to an enthusiastic veneration for Shakespeare, long ago enkindled and still glowing with unremitted ardour.

To close with a word or two to the critics. The author foresaw that these mice would necessarily be nibbling; he hath therefore, purposely left some rotten holes in the cheese. that the poor little animals may be kept doing; for, considering them as real objects of pity, he would by no means have them starve for want of employment.

He would not have them plume themselves, however, so immoderately as they sometimes do, on their prowess and penetration, at the casual detection of a maggot or the incidental destruction of a mite.

The reader may possibly think it a fault that the author hath in some places copied the blemishes of Shakespeare; but if he hath succeeded in any degree in hitting off his beauties, he hopes he shall stand excused, even supposing him mistaken in conceiving such blemishes necessary to preserve the similitude of the imitation. What limner, who piques himself on drawing an exact likeness, would omit a distinguishing mole or freckle, tho' not altogether

observing in his letter abovementioned, that there would be some risque in bringing on so many of Shakespeare's known characters in a new piece. — It is on this circumstance, however, that the merit of the imitation in a great degree depends; so that to have altered it for the stage would have in a great measure perverted the design of writing it.

agreeable

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agreeable to the sight, or compatible with symmetry and beauty?

But, if, after all, the publick should think the writer hath thrown his time away upon an insignificant subject, I protest against their present decision, and appeal — to the same public, when less intoxicated with the fumes of modern criticism, and better disposed to do justice to the immortal genius of SHAKESPEARE.

Jan. 1, 1766.

D R A

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

King HENRY the Fifth.

Dukes of { GLOUCESTER, } Brothers to the King.
 { BEDFORD, }
 { CLARENCE, }

Dukes of { YORK, } Uncles to the King.
 { EXETER, }

Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

The POPE's LEGATE.

Lord SCROOP of MASHAM.

The Earl of CAMBRIDGE.

Sir THOMAS GREY.

Sir JOHN FALSTAFF.

Justice SHALLOW.

Master SLENDER.

PLEADWELL, a Lawyer.

MITHRIDATE, a Doctor.

Fathers { PAUL, } two Friars.
 { LAWRENCE, }

BARDOLPH.

PISTOL.

PETO.

FRANCIS.

Dame URSULA, afterwards Lady FALSTAFF.

ELEANOR POINS, quondam Mistress to the King.

Hostess QUICKLY.

DOL TEARSHEET.

Bishops, Lords, Officer, Page, Guards, and Attendants.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE success, which a juvenile sketch of this Play hath met with in publication, having induced the Author to bring it on the stage ; he flatters himself the alterations, which were thought necessary to accommodate it to a theatrical audience, will not give less satisfaction to the reader than such scenes as he was obliged on that account to reject.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY

Mr. D O D D,

IN THE

CHARACTER of MERCURY.

[Mercury descends from the clouds, flying across the stage : Re-enters, followed by a servant, carrying a counsellor's gown and wig.

A LA MERCURE, equipp'd from top to toe,
My godship's name and quality you know.
Commission'd from Apollo, I come down
T'attend this bench of justices, the town.
Assembled here ; all members of the quorum :
To lay a matter of complaint before 'em.

The errand's not in character, 'tis true ;
But what our betters bid us, we must do.
Therefore t' appear with decency at session,
I've stole, you see, the garb of the profession.

This gown and band belong to serjeant Prig—
And this—our brother Puzzle's learned wig.—

{ Putting on the gown, &c.

Dress makes the man, Sirs, *vestis virum facit*——
So—now to business—Hem! —*si vestris placet*——
May't please your worships — Forgery, which is grown
To such a height as ne'er before was known——
I say, a forgery hath been committed,
By which king Pluto's myrmidons, outwitted,
Certain choice spirits, in theatric shape,
Have suffered from Elysium to escape ;
Of Shakespeare's offspring and ideal train,
Sprung, Pallas like, from an immortal brain !
Their names — I have 'em down—but, to be brief,
Shall only just enumerate the chief.

Imprimis,

P R O L O G U E.

E;

Imprimis, with Madeira swell'd, and sack,
 There's Sir John Falstaff, alias call'd Plump Jack;
 Next, captain Pistol, a notorious bully;
 And Miss Dol Tearsheet, fam'd for jilting cully;
 The widow Quickly, vintner, bawd and whore,
 With Bardolph, Peto, Nym and—several more;
 Link'd in a gang, each cut-purse with his crony,
 All arrant thieves and *Dramatis Personæ*;
 Bent, as suppos'd, to prostitute to shame
 Th' aforesaid Shakespeare's honour, name and fame.

I shall not trespass on your worship's time,
 T' explain at full the nature of this crime:
 But, Poets having an exclusive right
 To bring their mental progeny to light,
 This right's invaded by the party 'peach'd;
 Who, *vi et armis*, hath th' old bard o'er-reach'd.
 By counterfeiting of his hand, do ye see,
 Feloniously to set these vagrants free;
 With base design t'adopt them for his own,
 Tho' Shakespeare's property, and his alone.
 Such is the fact——A critic were an ass,
 No doubt, to let such imposition pass;
 Nor could a cheat so palpable succeed,
 But that the captain of the guard cou'dn't read——
 No, not for laughing, tho' to've sav'd his soul;
 The scene and circumstances were so droll.

Pistol, with yellow night-cap patch'd with red,
 With Mother Quickly was retir'd to bed;
 And, waking, swore, by Stryx, he would not come,
 Sans preparation, pike and beat of drum.

Of *aqua-vitæ* having stole a flaggon,
 Bardolph and Nym were playing at snap-dragon;
 Sometimes proceeding from hard words to blows,
 As by mistake Nym seiz'd on Bardolph's nose.

With Falstaff sat Dol Tearsheet, cheek by joll,
 And while she bus'd his chin and scratch'd his poll,
 Slipp'd from his thumb, his grandfire's copper ring,
 For love, not for the value of the thing:
 Then stole his empty purse; but no abuse;
 'Twas only done to keep her hand in use:
 He swearing, he'd be damn'd as soon as trust his
 Round belly more with Hal, or his chief-justice.

But

But this is wandering from the point—They're here,
 And on your summons ready to appear :
 Please to proceed then to examination ;
 And be attentive to their information.
 If, as your judgment cannot be erroneous,
 You take this forgery to be felonious,
 The author meaning fraud, I need not mention
 Your issuing warrants for his apprehension ;
 And when you've caught and into pieces tore him,
 Hang up his mangled carcase *in terrorem* ;
 In flagrant crimes the process should be short ;
 The law is clear——I leave it with the court.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF,
 JUSTICE SHALLOW,
 MASTER SLENDER,
 MR. PLEADWELL,
 DR. CAIUS.
 FRIAR LAWRENCE,
 ANCIENT PISTOL,
 BARDOLPH,
 CORPORAL NYM,
 GADSHILL,
 OFFICER,
 FRANCIS,
 PETO, and Attendants.

Mr. LOVE.
 Mr. PARSONS.
 Mr. DODD.
 Mr. AICHIN.
 Mr. BADDELY.
 Mr. BURTON.
 Mr. KING.
 Mr. MOODY.
 Mr. ACKMAN.
 Mr WATKINS.
 Mr STRANGE.
 Master BURTON.

W O M E N.

DAME URSULA, afterwards }	Mrs. PRITCHARD.
LADY FALSTAFF,	
BRIDGET, her Chambermaid,	Mrs. BENNET.
Mrs. QUICKLY,	Mrs. BRADSHAW.
DOL TEARSHEET,	Mrs. DORMAN.
	FALSTAFF's



FALSTAFF'S WEDDING, &c.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Westminster.

On the Day of the Coronation of King Henry the Fifth.

Enter Sir John Falstaff, solus.

WHAT a scurvy quarter is this? Not a bush, or a blind Cupid, in the neighbourhood! 'sblood, my legs will fail me ere I reach a tavern. Phoo—Phoo—It is some comfort, however. I escap'd being suffocated. The green-apron'd rascals, crowding after the procession, had well nigh made an end of me.

SCENE II.

Enter Bardolph.

Bar. O. Sir John, I'm glad I have found ye. I was in the fearfullest quandary for you in the world. I hope your honour has got no hurt.

Fal. Not it's death's wound, I hope; though Hal, indeed, look'd somewhat cold upon me.

Bar. Cold, Sir John! I am a-fear'd we shall be in limbo shortly: for my Lord-chief justice——

Fal. Hold thy ill omen'd croaking. If faithful services are thus required, I will turn cordwainer; yea, cobbler, and heel-piece old shoes, ere I have to do with blood-royal again. Ingratitude! I hate it.

Bar. To be sure, Sir John, what you say is right; for, as the song says, ingratitude is worse than the sin of witchcraft.

craft. But I hop'd your honour got no personable harm in the mob: you was carried off the terrace, for all the world like a dunghil from Mill-bank by a spring-tide.

Fal. Bardolph, thou hast the most filthy way of making comparisons; the most villainous similies. Let me have no more of them.

Bar. Why, they say, indeed, comparisons are odorous, Sir John.

Fal. Thine, however, are unfavoury enough. But I am ill at ease, and more dispos'd to spleen than merriment. I prythee, look out, and see if there be a bawdy-house at hand.

Bar. What here, so near the court, Sir John?

Fal. Where better? 'Sblood, dost think there are no whores at Court? Are there no dames of honour? Dost think Hal hath banish'd them too? Look out, look out.

Bar. I will, Sir John.

[*Exit* Bardolph.]

S C E N E III.

Sir John Falstaff. Solus.

I would I were in East-cheap. Mine hostess hath a most excellent cordial; and I never stood in more need of it than now. The gross indignity Hal hath put on me, sticks in my throat; and, in the end, may go near to choak me. I shall never gulp it down: that's flat: unless, indeed, a full cup of sherris help to clear the way. And then, how I shall stomach it; how I shall digest it, heaven knows. At present, both my person and knighthood are in jeopardy; my Lord chief-justice, to whose care I am commended, holding me not altogether in good-liking. But no matter—it I am to be provided for, what avails it who is my caterer? I could wish never helets, old white wine stood higher in his Lordship's favour; that I may not be stin'd at table, or in my by d inkings. I like not such splenetick temperaments; such phlegmatick constitutions; grey beards, that never sympathize with the wants of young men, or make proper allowances for their continual waste of radical moisture—'Sblood, I am as sore and as melancholy as a blind horse in a mill.——Bardolph! where a plague art thou gotten to, caterwauling?

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

Enter Mrs. Quickly and Doll Tearsheet.

Quick. O, Sir John Falstaff!

Doll. O, sweet Sir John!

Fal. How! mine hostess, and my good vestal, Mrs. Tearsheet! save ye gentlewomen both, good-morrow.

Doll. Godild ye, Sir John—well I vow and protest an I didn't say he would take as civil notice of his old acquaintance: nay, tho' he was created my lord-mayor of London.

Doll. What talk ye of lord-mayors and fusty citizens, gossip Quickly? Sir John is a courtier, and to be sure we must gratulate him now as one of the greatest knights in the nation—O sweet Sir John!

Fal. Truce with your formalities, Mrs. Dorothy. It is true indeed, I am one of the biggest knights in the kingdom—but, pray, have you seen none of our followers by the way? Pistol, nor Peto!

Quick. No verily, Sir John, not one.—We have seen nothing of any of them to day. They are all gone to the coronation, I warrant; and indeed we should have been there too, hadn't it been for that wicked villain, constable Fang, that, by a mistake of the beadle of our ward, would have carried us to Bridewel this morning.

Fal. How! mine hostess and my fair Dorothy to Bridewel!

Quick. Even to bridewel I can assure ye.

Fal. But how; how? dame Quickly to Bridewel! a decent church-going widow and a modest maiden, I should say, single gentlewoman, to a house of correction! why, what——

Quick. So I said, Sir John. Nuthook, Nuthook, says I, do you know what you do, says I?—Have me to Bridewel, says I.—I say to Bridewel indeed! a reputable house-keeper, that has paid scot and lot, and born the burthen of half the parish any time these twenty years.

Fal. That thou hast, hostess; of the male half, I'll be sworn for thee.

Quick. Besides, says I, do you know Sir John Falstaff? says I.—Touch a hair of Mrs. Dorothy's head,

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says I, and Sir John will make you smart for it, says I, every bone in your skin, says I.

Fal. And what said the rascal to that?

Quick. Said, Sir John! he stood mumchance, and spoke never a living syllable, but set his vinegar-visag'd catch-poles upon us; who fastened their claws into Mrs. Tearsheet's best kirtle, and tore it into as many rents and tatters, as there were in the old tapestry hangings I pawn'd to fit your honour out for the last expedition.

Fal. Pshaw!

Dol. Yes indeed, Sir John made a mere tatterdemalion of me. But we did so tongue the leather-ear'd vultures——

Fal. That they were glad to loose their gripe to get rid of you, I suppose.

Quick. Nay, Sir John, I was oblig'd to perduce an angel to convince them we were not the parties indicted.

Fal. Infidel rogues! would nothing less than the testimony of an angel convince them?

Quick. Ay I knew how Sir John would take it. O, how soundly will the knave constable be swing'd for this! a jack-in-office rascal! we shall cure the blue-skin'd runnion of his itch for whipping, I warrant ye.

S C E N E V.

Re-enter Bardolph

Bard. I have been looking all about, Sir John, but I cannot find one.

Quick. What is it Sir John wants, Mr. Bardolph?

Bard. A bawdy-house, mistress.

Quick. O Jesu-Marria! Mrs. Dorothy.

Fal. How, sirrah! did not I send thee to look out for a house of civil entertainment, where I might repose myself after my fatigue? What, you rogue, would you make of me, here, before these superabundantly-virtuous gentlewomen?

Quick. Yes, indeed, Sir John, and so to be sure we are: for, in good sooth, no-body need be ashamed of their civilities to your honour's knighthood. And as to a house of civil entertainment, Sir John; here is one hard by, where the knights and lords, and all the great gentlemen

tllemen of the court, are entertained, both by night and by day as civilly as at their own homes; and by gentlewomen as kind to them, I warrant ye, as their own ladies themselves.—A house of civil entertainment, a bawdy-house truly! Why, I keep a house of civility myself, and I would have you to know Mr. Bardolph——

Bar. Nay, nay, 'tis all one: what Sir John pleases.

Quick. Yes, by my truly, and so I think it ought, for if Sir John recommends you to the king——

Dol. Nay, were I Sir John, I'm sure I would never promote such a clown as Bardolph at court.

Bar. Ah! Dol, Dol, I am afraid our promotion will be at the gallows. If Sir John has any interest with the hangman, he may get me preferr'd, perhaps, to the top of the ladder.

Dol. Why, how now, varlet?

Quick. Do you hear? do you hear, sweet Sir John?

Fal. Ay hostess, Bardolph is somewhat blunt: but, as for the king——

Quick. Heav'n's blefs him! a sweet young prince he was; and, to be sure, a gracious king he is. But what of him, Sir John?

Fal. Why, marry,—hang him, hostess—Treason must out as well as murder.

Quick. I am 'maz'd Sir John; why, how is this? what a goodness! when—where—

Dol. How is this, good Bardolph?

Fal. Why, I will tell you how it is. That same ungrateful, sneaking, pitiful rascal, we are speaking of, is turn'd fanatick.

Quick. Fanatick! the king a fanatick!

Fal. Ay, fanatick, presbyter, bishop, if you will. Let his crown be his mitre; I care not.

Dol. We don't take your meaning, Sir John.

Fal. You must know then, Dol, that after having, in pure love and affection, ridden post day and night four-score and odd miles, to congratulate him on his accession, and condole with him on his father's death; instead of bidding me welcome to court, he preach'd me my own funeral sermon.

Quick. A funeral sermon!

Fal. Ay, hostess: for at the end of his discourse he

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order'd me to be buried alive, at ten miles distance from the court. And, to make this unnatural interment the surer, he has appointed my Lord chief-justice his undertaker, to see the disposal of my corpse.

Quick. Buried alive, quoth he! what, what is in all this?

Fal. In plain terms, dame Quickly, your gracious king hath banish'd me the presence; and, till he grows a graceless prince again, I am forbidden to approach his person, within ten miles, on penalty of being hang'd. Take ye me now?

Quick. O Jesu! is it possible?

Dol. Ah, ha! is it so? fits the wind in that quarter?

Quick. Well, as I am an honest woman, who would have thought it? it is a world to see!

Dol. And so, Sir John is in disgrace; still plain Jack Falstaff and one of us! ha! ha! ha! poor blown Jack!

Quick. A sad disappointment, indeed, Sir John! but, in good faith, things fall out so odd, and the world goes so wrong, that the times are so hard; that here, there, why, no longer ago now than yesterday, was I obliged to pay the lord-knows-what-all away for one thing or other: and then my misfortune to day; an angel to the constables; and beside this comes the day after to-morrow, when I must make up a sum for the wine-merchant: wherefore if your honour would but discharge your score in East-cheap; because, as why, your honour knows——

Fal. How's this, dame Quickly?

Quick. Because, I say, as why, your honour knows, seventy odd pound is a great deal of money for a poor widow woman to lose.

Fal. What talk you of losing, hostess?

Quick. True, Sir John, as you say, to be sure, I shall not be willing to lose it: for the law is open, and I know which way to get my money.

Fal. I am glad thou dost, hostess: as in that case I need not give myself the trouble to pay thee. The law is open, sav'st thou? Ay, like a mouse-trap, on the catch for nibbling clients. Enter thy action, and I will hold thee a gallon of sack, thy departed husband will get out of purgatory ere thou out of the hands of thy lawyer.

Quick.

Quick. Nay, Sir John, you need not twit me upon that. You need not fling my poor husband's soul in my teeth. He has not been gone so long; tho' for the matter of that, he might have been in heav'n before now, hadn't I lent you the money Mr. Dumb should have had to say masses for him. Yes, Sir John, you have put into that great belly of yours what should have got my poor husband out of purgatory, and now you reproach me for it. Had he been still alive you would not have us'd his disconsolate widow thus. You wouldn't, Sir John.

Fal. No, I'll be sworn I should not.

Quick. Well then, Sir John, out of charity, if it were nothing else, you ought to repay the money. Nay, if you don't, I'll pray night and day that you may be haunted by his ghost. Heav'n rest his soul. I would he might never sleep quietly in his grave, till he has made you pay me.

Fal. Go to, thou art a foolish woman: with good words thou mayst be paid.

Quick. No, Sir John, good words will not do. I must have money, Sir John. The priests won't get a soul out of purgatory without money. Besides, Sir John, good words are no payment, I can get no body to take them: good words will not do with me.

Fal. Well, well, I say you may be paid——

Quick. May! Sir John, I must. — You have thus shuffled off and on me, a good while; but I must, I must be paid, I must——

Fal. Heigh! heigh! wilt thou raise the neighbourhood upon us? If thou art clamorous, I will have thee duck'd in the Thames, for a bawd. What, a-plague, art thou drunk? A good-natur'd wench, as thou art, if it were not for thy shrill tongue and vixen humours. On the honour of my knighthood thou shalt be paid. Dost thou doubt mine honour?

Quick. Why, Sir John, to be sure, no-body would scruple to confide in your honour's honour: but then you know Sir John (no-body better) what honour is. It will neither buy coals nor candles; nor will my landlord take it for rent, nor the merchant for sack or sherry. But would you give me only the half in money, and leave the
the

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the rest to honour; so that a body might keep open house, Sir John. That would be doing something

Fal. Nay, if thou wilt be advis'd, I will do more for thee.—Bardolph! forget not to go (when I send thee) to the cashier, with whom I left a thousand pound this morning, and tell him to satisfy Mrs. Quickly forthwith.

Quick. A thousand pound!

Fal. The times are not so bad, hostess (thanks to our friend Shallow) but we may yet have a merry bout in Eastcheap.—How says my Dol?

Dol. Nay, you know, sweet Jack, I was always at your pleasure there.

Quick. That I will say for her, and a sweeter-natur'd better hearted creature never lay by the side of a true man. But, goodness heart! why do we tarry here, when Sir John complain'd of his being fatigued, and was looking for a house of civil entertainment? I will shew you the way incontinently, Sir John.

Fal. I thank thee, hostess; I am now somewhat recruited, and will endeavour to reach Eastcheap. And yet a cup of sack, by the way, I think, would not be amiss. Let us in. *[Exeunt.]*

S C E N E VI.

A Gallery in the Royal Palace.

Enter Earl of Cambridge and Lord Scroop of Masham meeting.

Scroop. My lord of Cambridge! wherefore dost thou leave

The presence thus, to skulk in holes and corners;
Indulging thy ungovernable spleen?

My life or't, ere 'tis long thou'lt be observ'd:

King Henry must be blind he does not mark

The clouds of treason low'ring on your brow.

By heav'n your heart's seen plainly in your face.

Rebellion threatens in your very looks.

Cast off those frowns, for shame; and wear a smile,

As if not Henry, but yourself were king.

Cam. Now, by th' immortal Edward's honour'd shade,
I cannot do't. This pomp coronation
Hath set my stirring spirits up in arms.

I'm

I'm stung with scorpions that I tamely suffer
 This limb of the dead tyrant Bolingbroke
 T' usurp the throne of my wife's brother, Mortimer.
 Deriv'd from Clarence, the third Edward's son,
 Whose birth preceded that of John of Gaunt;
 'Tis clear, in point of right, that Richard's death
 Left him the fairest title to the throne;
 And shall he live, secluded from the light,
 To breathe the dank dews of unwholesome prisons?
 To waste the flow'ring season of his days,
 Coop'd up within a nook of six foot space,
 Of all that kingdom to the which he's heir?
 No, by the blood of York, that fills my veins,
 I'll right him yet. He yet shall be a king.

Scroop. Soft, Cambridge, soft — stone walls at court
 have ears.

Know'st thou not that? I hate as much as thou
 The tyrant house of Lancaster. But, stay;
 We are not yet in state to pull it down:
 To shake it were at peril of our heads.
 Remember Percy, Worcester, Hastings, Scroop,
 And others, the first nobles in the land,
 That idly perish'd in this desperate cause.
 Blood hath already been too freely shed
 In this still thirty quarrel: shall we raise
 The sleeping axe to fall but on ourselves?
 No, be thou wary, cherishing thy hate
 No more than is consistent with thy safety.

Cam. I cannot bear to see this truant youth
 Thus disappoint our boldest expectations.
 It pours cold water on my smother'd hopes,
 That blaz'd at the decease of hated Bolingbroke

Scroop. Had Harry prov'd the idler we expected,
 There had indeed been hopes for Mortimer:
 But now——

Cam. Oh! I could go to daggers with him,
 To see his grave demeanour and address;
 But yesterday with thieves a pot-companion,
 The scoff and nay-word of each manly tongue.
 I'm all on fire, to hear his sober prate,
 See his mock-majesty and portly mein,
 So aping royalty, that all his peers

10 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Cry out in wonder of their gracious king. —

Lord Scroop of Masham, swear thou art my friend.

Scroop. Cambridge, what now? hast thou not found it oft?

Cam. I have—no more—shall Mortimer be king?

Scroop. With all my heart: would 'twere in Masham's power!

But steep and many are the steps between
His lowly cell and England's lofty throne:
Steps which, at present, none may safely tread,
In silence, therefore, hope for better times,
And bear thee evenly till heav'n shall send them.

Cam. I cannot, tho' at hazard of my head,
I was not form'd to play the hypocrite,
Or wear a face that's foreign to my heart.
Harry regards me with a friendly eye,
Profusely show'ring on me daily favours,
As if he sought to win me from myself:
Methinks I would not give him room hereafter
T'upbraid my soul with that foul sin ingratitude.

Scroop. How say'st thou? am not I in favour too?
But what of that? dost think what kings bellow,
Is giv'n in love? trust me, 'tis policy;
Mere policy! they must be serv'd—to you
What gives king Henry more than is your own?
For well he knows, that next to Mortimer,
Your wife lays claim to th' crown.—Respecting me,
Think you not Harry builds upon my service?
His kindness too may bribe me to forget
A Scroop was once beheaded by his father.
But, if I do forget it, or forgive,
May heav'n forget me in my last distress!

Cam. And yet, methinks, revenge so deeply rooted
Might make dissimulation deeply painful.
For me, I know my heart's so full of hate,
That shews of love but hurt me to the soul.

Scroop. Why what a squeamish conscience, lord, is
thine?
Not brook hypocrisy! what else is made
The universal business of mankind?
Mark but the thriving features of the world:
There's not a male, of half a grain of wit,

From

FALSTAFF's WEDDING. 11

From childhood upwards, ev'n from ten to eighty,
But is an arrant hypocrite. The school-boy,
Nature whipt out of him and barefac'd honesty,
Plodding with vacant ear and leaden eye,
Follows the tescue, poring o'er his book,
As if he conn'd his lesson; while abroad
His absent mind is robbing groves and orchards,
Or scam'ring o'er the fields in truant play
Grown up to manhood, the hot blood of youth
Urges the lustful stripling, in the dark,
To the rank stews in lanes, blind streets, and allies;
Whence, skulking ere 'tis light, he dons the mask
Of soberness demure, to cheat the day.
See next the worn-out ribaud, past his labour,
Scarr'd by the gougeres of his younger days;
With him hypocrisy turn'd inside out,
He puts the mask on with the worst side outwards,
And chaste, perforce, hires strumpets to abuse him.
In each condition, age, and state of life,
Thus seem men good or bad, they're so far neither;
Better or worse they may: but all agree
To dupe each other by hypocrisy.

Cam. What argues this but poverty of soul;
The sneaking cowardice of narrow minds?

Scroop. Cambridge! we live but in a narrow world.
Had individuals all the souls of kings
This globe would be too little to contain them;
Each grasping at a kingdom for himself.
But art thou so dispos'd; to Harry—go.
Lay ope thy honest heart, and in return,
He'll take thy head. How weak is this impatience!
I'm ever-bound to Mortimer and thee;
But let us not run headlong into ruin.
Fortune's a fickle mistress and a coy one;
Let us, attentive, wait her lucky minute:
'Tis hers to shape occasion, ours to seize it.

Cam. Impatience! say'st thou? canst thou, Scroop,
foresee

A glimpse of aught that in the womb of time
May yield a fairer season for success?
Thou know'st we've many staunch and loyal friends;
And what will boot delay? revenge hath sigh'd

Unsatisfied

12 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Unsatisfied too long ; and desperate ills
Demand a desperate cure.

Scroop. I'll tell thee what.

Thou know'st th' enormous riches of the clergy
Have set the envious barons on their backs ;
Who mean, th' ensuing parliament, to strip
The church of half its overgrown possessions.
This, with the late encroachments of the pope,
That gall the king, as touching his prerogative,
Will likely raise commotions in the realm,
And form divisions, we may profit by.

Cam. As how ?

Scroop. Thou must, by all means, chime in with the
clergy ;

And raise an interest in the court of Rome.
Assure the legate of your pious zeal,
And that of Mortimer, to th' holy see :
Forgetting not how willing he'd have been,
If England's king, to yield the nomination
Of bishops and their spiritual hangers on,
Throughout the kingdom, to his holiness :
Hinting beside the payment of th' allegiance
And tribute first exacted of king John.

Cam. How may this speed ?

Scroop. The clergy on our side,
Should our young king break also with the French,
As in all likelihood he rashly will,
The state in ferment, Rome and France our friends,
Something may be attempted with success.

Cam. By Heav'n, Lord Scroop, thou hast a plotting
head

In such a crisis, what may not be done ?

Scroop. Mean-while, I undertake to urge the king
In his resentment 'gainst both Rome and France.
But hush, be gone—of this another time.
You go to the king—I'm bidden to his closet :
Beside on secret business. When we meet,
Hold we, in publick, ever different minds.
Dissimulation as the means is honest,
When honest is the end we mean t' obtain.

Cam. Well, as I hope our time is near at hand,

I will

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I will dissemble, smother up my thoughts,
And mutter as discreetly as I may. [Exit Cambridge.

S C E N E VII.

Lord Scroop, solus.

I fear this rash-tongued Cambridge will not wait
The setting on. A hot-brain'd cuckold 'tis,
That sees not into th' mill-stone tho' I pick it.
He dreams of England's crown in right of's wife,
O'er whom I reign, the secret paramour.
Could I shake Lancaster's tall house to th' ground,
Cambridge and Mortimer might tumble too,
And both be timely buried in the ruins.
And then who knows (things stranger have been known)
But I, her wedded Lord, may mount the throne. [Exit.

S C E N E VIII. *A Street.*

Enter an Officer of the King's Household and a Friar.

Offic. There, good friar, thou hast it: it would indeed
little conduce to raise the king's wisdom in the general
estimation of the world, to have it thought in the power
of such unworthy men as Falstaff and his fellows, to lead
him implicitly into all those extravagances under which
the character of his youth suffer'd: and yet to it would
go near to be suspected, if his highness should now act to-
wards them with ill-timed severity.

Friar. Son, well observ'd. I commend, therefore, my
Lord-chief-justice's prudence, in treating their wicked-
ness as infirmity, and will readily undertake to commune
with them, on the grievous enormity of their dissolute
lives. I have already a goodly penitent in a fair fine com-
panion of his highness.

Offic. A the-companion! who is that?

Friar. I may not tell her name, unless indeed to a
friend, under the veil of secrecy. Thou know'st Ned
Poins: he had a sister——

Offic. A favourite of the prince, belike. I never heard
of this before; his highness then, it seems, had discretion
in his wildness.

C

Friar.

14 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Friar. This wench is also of such good accomplishments, that 'tis no wonder he should pay her deference.

Offic. Nay, it appears the king held Poin in less disdain than any of his fellows, by his providing him with an honourable post, unless——

Friar. Yet this thou seest he has done prudently, by placing him at distance from his person.

Offic. That's true; and yet, for all that, if one might whisper the truth, Poin is perhaps more indebted, for his preferment, to his sister's beauty, than his own deserts.

Friar. With this we've naught to do. Let us not hint at censure now; having so just a cause, from his highness's sudden reformation, to be thankful that England is so well king'd.

Offic. Therefore, good father Paul, to the business in hand.—My Lord-chief-justice would have you begin with Sir John Falstaff, the captain general and ring-leader of this vicious troop. If you can dispose him to any good, something may be hoped for in the rest.

Friar. I will use the means; and yet that Falstaff has been untoward from his youth up. I knew him, when a boy and page to Mowbray, duke of Norfolk; even then he surpassed in roguery all the unlucky pages about the court. For indeed he had a shrewd wit: but what a miserable use he has made of it!—Well, heav'n pardon him.

Offic. And convert him too, good father.

Friar. Amen to that. But, pray, where am I to find this wicked knight? I am told he is seldom out of some house of carnal recreation: must I teach morality in a bawdy-house?

Offic. There are few places, father, where it is more wanting.

Friar. But the honour of my function—I may perhaps be indecently insulted.

Offic. Of that you need not be afraid. The eye of the law is on them, and they will no doubt stand on their good behaviour; being sensible it is only through the lenity of my Lord-chief-justice, that the king's order of banishment is not rigorously executed against them.

Friar. I will attend these reprobates.

Offic. His Lordship would have you bring Falstaff over

to

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING. 15

to retire into a monastery, if possible ; but thou wilt see what may best be done with him ; and on thy report his Lordship's farther pleasure will be known. Farewel, good father, I will see thee again at the priory. [*Exit Officer.*]

Friar. God be with you, Son.

SCENE IX. *Street continued.*

Friar, Solus.

I will go ; but I fear my mission will prove as fruitless as that of many other Apostles, sent among the infidels. As there is no danger of martyrdom, however, I am content—Persuade Sir John Falstaff to turn monk ! could I work miracles, indeed, and, like St. Thomas, turn an Ethiop white, something might be said for it : but, as it is, I despair of converting an old deboshee from two such prevailing heresies as the whore and the bottle. [*Exit.*]

SCENE X. *Street continued.*

Enter Justice Shallow and Master Slender.

Slen. I wonder now, coz ; when you know what a desperate kind of a horrible man Sir John is, you should—

Shal. Tut—Tut—I fear him not ; there's ne'er a Sir John Falstaff in the nation shall over-reach me.

Slen. But what's done cannot be help'd, coz ; he over-reach'd you now, as I take it, when you lent him the money.

Shal. Well, cousin of mine, then it is my turn now to over-reach him, and get it again.

Slen. That, indeed, cousin Shallow, to be sure would be quite right ; tit for tat, as we say in the country ; but then he is such a bloody-minded carriff ; you know he broke my head once for nothing at all ; and if he should get an inkling that you are going to law with him, O Lord, O Lord, I shall never sleep in quiet again.

Shal. Poh, you chit, if he breaks the peace, I shall know what to do with him, I warrant ye.

Slen. Ay, there indeed, cousin, ecod, I did not think of that. If I am in fear of my life, I can answer taking him up with a warrant, and binding him over to his good behaviour. Suppose therefore, coz, we swear the peace

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against him first, and lay him fast by the heels before we enter the action — And yet I don't know, if I might advise ye, I would wash my hands of him, and thank God I was rid of a knave.

Shal. And so lose my thousand pound!

Sten. If I might advise ye, coz.

Shal. And shall a chit, a cullion, a beardless boy, presume to advise Robert Shallow, Esq? To your a, b, c, your primer, to school again. Advise me! do you think I will lose a thousand pound by e'er a swaggering knight in England?

Sten. Nay, I say nothing, cousin Shallow; but I know a little of the law. I did not live so long with my uncle Lingersuit for nothing. I know he used to say none of his clients got any thing by it, but losses. Mind, I say nothing; but don't you remember the picture that us'd to hang up in goody Undone's stone parlour? (the was one of my uncle's clients too) of the man, I mean, that lost his doublet, in going to law for his cloak. There was another picture too——

Shal. Don't tell me——

Sten. Of the dog and the shadow. I have heard them explained; marry, good morals; good morals, cousin Shallow.

Shal. Talk not to me. I tell thee, I will spend half my estate before the rascally knight shall carry it off so. I had rather the inns of court should share the money among them than let that gor-bellied knave feast his enormous guts at any free cost of mine. I will to my counsel immediately.

Sten. You know best, to be sure, cousin Shallow, but——

Shal. But me no buts, I say, but come along;
Your cousin Shallow puts up no such wrong. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A TAVERN.

Falstaff sitting at a Table ; Bardolph attending.

Fal. COME, fill me another glass, Bardolph. Where are the women?

Bar. They are gone home, Sir John, that they may get ready to attend your honour in the evening. They went away while you was asleep.

Fal. Come on then, drink ; we will empty the flask, and follow. Here's to our better fortune. *(Drinks.)*

Bar. Ah, Sir John, I am afraid our fortune hath been at its highest flood. We have seen our best days.

Fal. So the world goes, Bardolph. Up and down! But is it not hard now? I that have——but that's nothing. I hate boasting. It is, however, well known what pains I have taken to make a man of that Hal. Nay, you yourself are privy to many the good offices I have done him. Before the younker knew me, he knew nothing. The sneak-cup could not drink sack; made conscience of going to church on holidays; and blush'd like a scarlet cloak, at entering a bawdy-house. Then he made a poor hand at cards and dice, and was a mere novice, a very noodle, at a robbery on the highway. I instructed him in all these manly exercises. I was content to win his money, to teach him gaming: to get drunk myself to make him so: to teach him sabbath-breaking by going ever to the church with a chimney in it,—the tavern. And then, again, mercy on this round body of mine! how have I been pox'd to teach his smock-face whoring! Nay, setting rotten limbs and dignity aside, have I not even pimp'd for the bathful rogue? Such a prince of Wales! by my troth I was ashamed of him. Had it not been for me, the milk-sop might have been crown'd before he had lost his maidenhead.

Bar. And that would have been a pity, Sir John, to be sure.

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Fal. It was I first taught him to way-lay the true-man; for I knew him when he durst not cry *stand* to a turkey-cock; nay, a gander, of the ordinary size of a green-goose, had it met him on a common, would have made him run for it: and yet I would have so case-harden'd him, that he might have robb'd his father's exchequer. But the toast-and-butter would not learn. I went further yet; and would not only have embolden'd his actions, but have taught him the manly arts of conversation. In the stile military, for instance, or swearing.—

Bar. Sir John, I believe, there you forget yourself; the prince wanted no assistance of you in that; for when he was a crack no higher than this, he would swear ye as well as a man six foot high.

Fal. Right, Bardolph, you are right. I remember me; swearing indeed he knew: for, tho' but a king's son, he would, as thou say'st, rap out an oath like an emperor. But then for the quintessence of all elocution, the use of the hyperbole, vulgarly call'd lying; there I am a master, yet what a deal of pains it hath cost me to teach Hal to lie; and all thrown away upon him. He would never do it roundly. He had no genius that way.

Bar. You know, Sir John, the prince never could away with lying. He us'd to say 'twas beneath a gentleman and a soldier.

Fal. Well, well, he will never shine in the recital of his own exploits as Xenophon, Cæsar, and I have done.

Bar. Why, Sir John, to be sure, you have done something.

Fal. Something! the services I have done him and his father are out of number. Methinks my behaviour, in the ever memorable action at Shrewsbury, should make him blush at his ingratitude. Who kil'd Hotspur? Did not I give him his death's wound in the thigh? Was it not I who took prisoner that fiery dragon Colville? and that even alive! And am I thus requited? Is this the guerdon of my great achievements? Hang valour, I'll hack my sword no more. Thus has it ever been the fate of merit to be rewarded. Alcibiades and Bellisarius for that!

Bar. Ay, Sir John, they were tall fellows: they were sadly

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sadly us'd indeed: I have heard of them. But that was in king John's time, I think.

Fal. They were the Falstuffs of antiquity, Bardolph.

Bar. Like enough, Sir John: they were before my time, to be sure; though Pistol told me, t'other day, that general Bellifarius was his god-father.

Fal. Pistol is an ignorant braggard; an ass: I have injur'd my dignity by associating with rascals, not worthy to wait at my heels. What tell'st thou me of Pistol?

Bar. Nay, Sir John, I meant no harm. I do think you deserve to be made a lord of indeed.

Fal. A lord! I expected to have been made nothing less than an earl or a duke. I can assure ye. And then, for my well-known œconomy, to have had the sole management of the exchequer, at least.

Bar. And instead of that to be banish'd——

Fal. I know not if I heard the word banish. I was forbidden indeed to come near the king's person by ten miles; but I was not at that distance when those injunctions were laid on me. Quere now (it might pose a casuist let me tell ye) whether I am thereby injoin'd to march right out, ten miles an end; whether the negative, *not come*, amounts to the positive, *go*.—I will not understand it so; and, if that be my Lord-chief-justice's construction, by the Lord, I will put him to the trouble of carrying of me: I will be laid up with the gout ere I budge a foot.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John, the king did say, banish.

Fal. Admit it: unless he means to reside for ever in a place, and be in his own proper person as immoveable as a church, I hold my life on a damn'd precarious tenure. He must give me timely notice of his motions, that I may regulate mine accordingly; otherwise, if he be travelling my way, we may happen to encounter, and I get myself hang'd through inadvertency. I do not think it safe, therefore, to stir out of town, without more explicit orders. Fill me another glass.

Bar. The flask is out, Sir John.

Fal. Out! we have no longer any business here, then. Pay the drawer, Bardolph, and come along. [*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E

S C E N E II.

A Room in the King's Palace.

Enter King Henry and Lord Scroop.

King. Thou didst observe, in th' east isle of the abbey,
A wench that fainted as we pass'd along,
And drew a crowd of our observers from us.

Scroop. I did, my liege: methought a fairer damsel
Mine eyes had ne'er beheld; when lo! o'th'sudden,
Her looks were chang'd, the roses left her cheeks,
And down she sunk, as if unpitying death
Had laid his clay-cold hand upon her heart.

King. Wist you the cause?

Scroop. I guess no other than the sweltry crowd,
Affecting oft such tender-fashion'd dames,
Oppress'd her gentle spirits: for I mark'd
An elegance and softness in her features,
That spoke the delicacy of her frame.

King. O Scroop, it is indeed a gentle soul;
She was the earliest fav'rite of my youth,
I her first love, and many a happy hour,
In all th' endearing intercourse of souls,
We've pass'd together.

Scroop. My gracious liege,
Your highness young, the damsel in her bloom,
Where could love find itself more fit employment?

King. Thou know'st, lord Scroop, our present resolution,
To cast off th' idle follies of our youth:
Hence our command to banish from the court
The lewd companions of those boyish days.
Nor this fair wench is sister to Ned Poins,
Whom I have late provided for i'th North:
And, for I would not see the girl again,
I gave her ghottly father late in charge
To place her in a sisterhood of nuns,
With an allowance of five hundred marks
A year for life. I thought her cloister'd up,
And wonder'd much to see her in the abbey.

Scroop.

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Scroop. She meant, no doubt, to move your highness' pity;

And not unlikely but that shew of grief,
And mock of swooning was a female trick,
An artifice that's common with these giglots.

King. I judge not so; but, be that as it may,
I will not have my purposes delay'd,
Nor firm resolves capriciously disputed.
Go to her, therefore, thou, my friendly Scroop,
And say, her unexpected disobedience
Awakes our high displeasure.

Scroop. I will, my liege; yet, by your highness' leave,
Thinks not your majesty she's yet too young,
Too fair, and too enamour'd of the world,
To turn recluse, and hide her in a cloister?
I warrant ye, my liege, a lusty lover
Would find a hearty welcome with her yet.

King. My lord of Malmesbury, there I hold you wrong her.
She is indeed most loving, kind, and gentle:
And yet I think not more than she is true:
Faithful of heart, sincere as open day,
A vestal's modesty sits on her brow,
And awes even bold licentiousness to silence.
She feels I fear, too anxiously the effect
Of that necessity that caus'd our parting.

Scroop. Where, in the name of wonder, did she learn
Those dainty manners? of her brother Ned?
Your majesty in truth is much deceiv'd;
Had not yourself so highly done her honour,
Some humbler lover had, perhaps, prevail'd,
And shar'd her favours on as easy terms.

King. Thou knew'st her not.

Scroop. My liege, I know the sex,
And judge not women by the things they were.
The kindest of them all were vestals once:
But soon as e'er they've learn'd their mother's game,
All that is left of chastity's grimace,
Mere affectation, prudery, and pride.

King. You hold them, then, but lightly in esteem:
But general rules admit exceptions, Scroop.

Scroop. O, yes, my liege, perhaps, in twice ten thousand

One may be found, whose mind's of chaster stuff
Than her frail body: but with all the rest
Body and soul go lovingly together.

King. Go then, my lord, and in our gentle Nell
Of twice ten thousand think thou seest that one,
Whose mind is yet right chaste. Make known our will,
And in the gentlest terms your kindness may.

Scroop. I will, my liege.

[*Exit King Henry.*]

S C E N E III. *Room continued.*

Lord Scroop, solus.

A lucky errand to this peerless beauty!
I mark'd her in the midst of her distress,
And of her snowy neck and heaving breasts
Caught a side-glance, that fir'd my eager heart,
And kindled all the ardours of desire.
That she should turn out Harry's mistress too;
And thence we make no doubt an easy conquest,
Whate'er his princely vanity suggests;
This too is fortunate; nor less his pride,
That churlishly devotes those charms to heav'n,
On which himself has feasted till he's tir'd.
Sure a kind beauty sooner will retreat
Into a lover's arms than to a cloister!
And yet I may not long detain her thence.
Love's a repast, so cloying at the best
That appetite soon leaves the keenest guest;
To me the banquet of her charms be given,
And, sated once, I'll yield them too to heav'n. [Exit.]

S C E N E IV. *A Street.*

Enter Justice Shallow, Master Slender, and a Lawyer.

Sbal. And so, master Pleadwell, that is your opinion.—
If it be so, my money's gone.

Law. Indeed, I am of that opinion, justice Shallow.

Sbal. What! how! that my money's gone?

Law. Nay, I know not that. I say, I am of opinion
you should have taken a bond, or obligation, at the time
of lending it, friend Shallow. A thousand pound on the
bare word of a courtier; and that courtier Sir John Fal-
staff!

staff! ne'er an alderman in the city of London would have lent a thousand pence on such security.

Slender. Oh that ever a country 'squire should have less wit than a city alderman!

Law. A thousand pound, Mr. Shallow, is——

Shallow. A thousand pound. I know it is, master Pleadwell, I know it well. But pray now, is there no method in the law to recover it? He cannot have spent it yet: cannot we compel him to restitution? Arrest him—arrest him, Mr. Pleadwell.

Law. But, should he deny the debt, how will you prove it? and who knows, on such an emergency, what Sir John Falstaff will not do?

Shallow. Nay, he will lye: that's the truth on't.

Slender. Ay, coz, and that most consumedly too.

Shallow. I can prove his receipt of the money.

Law. But the conditions, justice Shallow. — What have you to shew that he is engag'd to return it? and when?

Shallow. Nothing, I was weak enough to lend it him on his bare word.

Slender. Nay, cousin Shallow, not so neither. I'll be sworn he borrow'd it upon his oath. I'll take my Bible sacrament of that. Didn't I hear Sir John swear?—Yes, Mr. Pleadwell, I myself, in *propria persona*, heard Sir John, alias John Falstaff, knight, *viva voce, viva voce*, Mr. Pleadwell—Go to—I know a little of the law.—I say, I heard the aforesaid Falstaff swear and protest to my cousin Shallow (*videlicet* Robert Shallow of Gloucestershire, esq; justice of the peace, and of the quorum) upon the honour of a true knight, to give him a thousand pound again; and besides that, the comings-in of a better thing, in his majesty's court at London.

Law. Ah, Master Slender, these knights have just honour enough to swear by; but, for any thing further, I am apprehensive we shall find him one of those honourable knights, whose word is as good as their oath. But see, if I mistake not, yonder he comes; this encounter may perhaps save us the trouble of attending him at home—Let us speak him fair, and perswade him, if possible, to sign an obligation for the money. If we can do that, we may trounce him. Let me alone with him.

S C E N E

Slender. O would you could, Mr. Pleadwell! what would I give methinks to see him well trounc'd! if it was only for giving me once a bloody coxcomb.

SCENE V. *Street continued.*

Enter Falstaff.

Fal. How! Master Shallow consulting with his lawyer! are ye thereabouts friend Shallow? would you hamper me with an action? (*Aside.*) I will pass them by. [*Going.*]

Shal. Sir John, Sir John, a word with you if you please.

Fal. O my good friends Robert Shallow, Esq; and Master Slender! how fare ye, gentlemen both?

Law. Sir John, Mr. Shallow here has——

Fal. Ha! what mine old acquaintance Master Wheedlepoint! how is it with your health, Master Wheedlepoint?

Law. Pleadwell is my name, Sir John.

Fal. Right.—I cry you mercy.—Roundabout Pleadwell, I think. My memory is not so retentive as——

Law. No offence, Sir John: that is not the case.

Fal. Marry but it is, Mr. Pleadwell; a treacherous memory is my great defect: and a misnomer in law thou knowest——

Law. Would be matter of consequence, Sir John. But that is not our business at present. Mr. Shallow here hath put a case.——

Fal. Ay, Master Shallow should know something of the law too. Was not he at Clement's-inn when thou wert first enter'd there? That must be many years ago, Mr. Pleadwell.—Let me see. How many years ago must that be, Master Shallow? Why you carry your age well, Mr. Pleadwell.

Shal. Pretty well, pretty well, Sir John, but that——

Fal. Nay marry, I say, very well, Master Shallow. And pray what is become of young Puzzlecote, and Dick Silvertongue, your fellow students there? they were call'd to the bar, I suppose. That Dick was a prate-a-pace rogue; and a devil among the bona robas. He and Master Shallow here were two with the wenches. Ha, Master Shallow!

Shal. No matter, Sir John, at present we would confer on other business.

Fal.

Fal. Nay, gentlemen, if ye are on business, I crave your pardon, and leave ye. I am not us'd to be impertinent.

Law. You are not a going, Sir John; it is with you our business lies.

Fal. Business with me!

Shal. Yes, about the thousand pound, Sir John.

Fal. What mean you, Master Shallow?

Shal. That you borrow'd of me, Sir John.

Slen. Yes, Sir John, the thousand pound you borrow'd of my cousin Shallow, Sir John.

Fal. Take me with ye, gentlemen, both; let me understand ye. You presented me, indeed, with a thousand pound to promote your interest at court, Master Shallow; and may depend on it, if I can serve you—

Shal. Fiddle, faddle, Sir John, I expect my money again: your interest at court is not worth a farthing.

Fal. I cannot help that; the more is my misfortune, Mr. Shallow; you see my heart is good.

Law. If so, Sir John, you will not refuse to give Mr. Shallow something to shew for his money, under your hand.

Fal. How dost thou know that, Mr. Pleadwell? I must consult my counsel in this case.

Law. There is no need, Sir John; I will draw up a little instrument, to which thou wilt set thy hand immediately.

Fal. Not while I have a head, master Pleadwell, I like not running head over head in these matters. By latter Lammas, or saint Falstaff's day, I may perhaps bethink me.

Law. I know of no saint of thy family in the kalendar, Sir John.

Fal. Well, well, there may be saints of a worse. Our merit hath not stood in the way of promotion; that's all: and yet there are as many whoremasters there as lawyers, I believe. But I cannot tarry now to hold farther question with thee; fatigued as I am, and earnest to reach my lodgings yonder.

Law. If thou wilt there sign the instrument, Sir John, we will attend you thither.

Fal. Wilt thou? it is a notorious bawdy-house.

Law. No matter, Sir John.

Fal. No matter, sayst thou? Is it then no matter for one of the grave sages of the law to be seen in a public bawdy-house? Lord, Lord, what will this world come to! My conscience, however, is more tender: I should be sorry to give such occasion of scandal.

Larw. Please you, Sir John, to be serious. Let us rightly understand each other.

Fal. With all my heart, good Master Pleadwell; then, to be plain with you, I find you do not know me. You talk to me of restitution and conditions; didst thou ever know Sir John Falstaff make restitution on any conditions? And dost thou think me so unpractis'd a courtier as to return the perquisites of my calling, because I am turn'd out; or to restore the purchase of my good-will, because I am not likely to get in. What take ye me for a younger? a geck? — Go to — you cannot play upon me — Master Shallow, rest you content: your money is in good hands; and, if I do not spend it like a gentleman, never trust me with a thousand pound again.

Shal. Oh! that I ever did trust such a caitiff!

Larw. But, pray, were these the conditions, Mr. Shallow? Were you to be repaid by a place at court?

Slen. To be sure. Why what do you think, Mr. Pleadwell, cousin Shallow was fool enough to lend a thousand pound for nothing? Why, I, myself, was to be made a great man too; and that into the bargain.

Shal. Cousin Slender, speak in your turn, I pray you.

Larw. Were these terms specified?

Fal. Not indeed on parchment, *signatum et sigillatum*, Mr. Pleadwell. A courtier's promise is not, indeed, very good in law. But I can tell ye the posts I should have procur'd for these noble squires: and by'r lady, thou wilt say they would have been well occupied. Having a little pique or so at my Lord-chief-justice, and Mr. Shallow, here, thinking himself qualified, I promis'd him my interest for his worship's removal from the quorum to his lordship's place on the bench. Was it not so, Mr. Shallow?

Shal. Don't belye me, Sir John, don't cheat me of my money, and laugh at me too. Robert Shallow esquire will not put up with that.

Fal.

Fal. Then for Mr. Slender here, I purpos'd, for his address and elocution, to have got him appointed orator to the house of parliament; or otherwise, in consideration of his figure and magnanimity, to have made him a staff officer, or captain of horse, at the least.

Slen. Nay, Sir John, you did not tell me what; but I expected some notable place, I'll assure ye: for I look upon myself, plain 'squire as I stand here, to be somebody.

Shal. Coz, coz, you are an ass, coz.

Slen. Why, why, I didn't lend him any money; I.

Law. Justice Shallow, this is a very simple affair. I am sorry it is not in my power to serve you in it. Sir John, if you had either honour or honesty, you would restore the money; but, as you make pretensions to neither, I leave you. [Exit Lawyer.]

SCENE VI. *Street continued.*

Falstaff, Shallow, and Slender.

Fal. Well, my masters, you hear the counsel learned in the law. Will you to supper with me? You shall see I am no niggard. If you will lodge with me in Eastcheap, you shall see the thousand pound fairly spent in sack: you shall share with me to the utmost farthing. But for dry restitution, I have not been accusom'd to it of many years. You would not have me a changeling at this time of day. I hope, Master Shallow.

Shal. Changeling! no, Sir John, thou art no changeling; but, depend on it, I will not put up this wrong. Robert Shallow, esq; will neither eat nor drink with thee. I will have further advice, and, if the law will not help me, I will take other methods. I will have my money; depend on't I will have my money. [Exit Shallow.]

Slen. Ay, ay, we shall find means to get the money; never fear. [Exit Slender.]

SCENE VII. *Street continued.*

Falstaff, solus.

Nay, I fear it not—at least before I shall have found means to spend it: and then, get it who may; it concerns not me. We shall see, however, whose business

will be done first. Mine will go merrily forward. Ah! shallow Master Shallow! But who could have thought the snipe would have went to counsel, to get himself laugh'd at? Then to see how demurely Sir Slyboots angled for me, as if I had been a gudgeon! How cunningly the rascally barrador would have hook'd me on his instrument! But I was even with the methodical knave. — My friend Shallow will never bring it to bear an action at law; and if he should, as I have the cash, I am on the right side of the hedge. Indeed, were I to go to law for a mint of money, I would chuse to have it all in my possession. There is nothing like it. Possession is the very life's blood of a bad cause: on the strength of which in mine, I will home to supper. *[Exit.]*

SCENE VIII. *A Tavern in Eastcheap.*

Enter Bardolph, Mrs. Quickly, and Dol Tearsheet.

Bar. He will be here incontinently, hostess: I only slept before to let you know he was a coming.

Quick. But is it veritably true, Bardolph, that Sir John has got a thousand pound by him?

Dol. Ay, is that true, Bardolph?

Bar. True, upon honour; he had it of justice Shallow of Gloucestershire; and it lies now in master Gingle-cath, the banker's hands. But Sir John will be here momentarily. Is ev'ry thing ready?

Quick. In a minute we are all clear. Run, good Dol, and receive the knight at the door. Francis! what, Francis!

Fran. (without) Anon, anon, Sir.

Quick. Light up candles in the passage. A bottle of sherries, Francis, quick, you sleeping knave. — Always upon a snail's gallop! O that ever woman should be plagued with such creeping varlets!

Dol. O, here is Sir John, himself.

SCENE IX. *Tavern continued*

Enter Sir John Falstaff.

Quick. Jaded to death, I warrant! — An easy chair, good Bardolph. Please you to depose yourself, Sir John.

Fal.

Fal. Soh ! now have I taken up my sitting again, in my old quarters. A glass of sherris, Francis !

Dol. And how do you find yourself, my sweet knight ?

Fal. Tolerably thirsty. (*Drinks.*) I can drink ; and that is all the bodily functions I am capable of. I am as stiff, ev'ry part about me, as a walking taylor or Don Diego on a sign-post.

Dol. Nay, Sir John, if that be the case, it is not over with you yet. Give me a buss.

Fal. Go, Dol, you are riggish — get you gone, you water-wag-tail, you ; I am not merrily dispos'd.

Dol. But, will you give me a new kirtle at Bartlemew fair ?

Fal. I will, Dol. — Nay, I cannot bear you on my knee.

Dol. Why, how came you so terribly maul'd, my leman ?

Fal. Did not I tell ye ?

Quick. No indeed, Sir John, your honour spoke of fatigue ; but did not descend to particulars. Your honour fell asleep, you know.

Fal. Well then, I will tell ye now. Give me first a glass of sherris. (*Drinks.*) You must know that, after the king (hang him for a sheep-stealing cur) gave me that rebuff I told you of ; he stalk'd magisterially away, and left me to the mercy of the multitude : when, as I stood parleying with mine antient ; mine arms a-kembo thus ; a knot of elbowing earls bore me down before them, with the impetuosity of a torrent. Lo ! there was I, jam'd fast in the midst of a vile grouse of mechanics, as if we had grown together in a body corporate : and in this jeopardy was I carried along ; sometimes bolster'd up on all sides, at the confluence of several turnings, like a May-pole ; and at others, wire-drawn between two stone-walls, as if they meant to make chitterlings of me : now this fair round belly taking the form of a christmas pie, and by and by press'd as flat as a pancake. It is a miracle I did not burst in the midst of them. Had it not been for the sufficiency of my buff doublet, I should have certainly bursted.

Dol. If you had, Sir John, you would have went off with a report like a bladder.

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Fal. A bladder, ye jade, a demi-culverin at least. I should have died an hero: my exit would have made some noise in the world.

Quick. Heaven forbid, Sir John, you should ever die a virulent death I say.

Dol. I hope, indeed, sweet knight, you will never be press'd to death. That must be an odd end, and yet methinks I could bear much.

Fal. I'll be sworn thou could'st, Dol: but thou art a woman, and made to bear.

Quick. Yes, in good sooth, poor woman is made to bear ev'ry thing. She must suffer all a man's ill humours: let 'em lie never so heavy upon her: and, by my truly some men are nothing else. But, to be sure, Sir John, you was us'd most unhumanly. Would no body take pity upon you?

Fal. Fity! the most remorseless rascals! they made no more of me than if I had been a lump of dough, they were kneading to make dumplings of: and to expostulate with the villains would have been preaching to the winds.

Dol. Why did not you exert your courage, Sir John? draw upon them?

Fal. Draw, say'st thou? I could not come at my rapier, to be master of a kingdom. And as for good words, — in return for the few I gave them, they let fly their jests so thick at me, and pepper'd me so plaguily with small wit, that I was dumbfounded.

Dol. I thought you would never have been overmatch'd that way, Sir John.

Fal. Yet so it was, Doll. They were holiday-wits, and came loaden with choke-pears: but, indeed, I was overpower'd by numbers. Two to one, Doll, you know — They pelted me from all quarters. Will you hear. I will give you a slice of their sarcasms; a sample of the gibing pellets they threw at me. As I was thus stemming the tide and crying out for the lord's sake, a dried eel's skin of a fishmonger ask'd me how I could complain of the crowd. "Is a po' poise ill at ease, said he, amidst a glut of sprats and herrings?" I had no time to answer the smell, before a barber-surgeon, the very model of the skeleton in his glass-case, offered to tap me for the dropsey; and to make us all elbow-room by letting

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ting out a puncheon of canary, at my girdle. Right, cries a third, at the word canary, "I'll hang'd if any thing be in the doublet of that fat rogue but hog's skins of Spanish wine;" and incontinently they roar'd out, on all sides, "Tap him, there, — tap him, master surgeon." — 'Sblood; I was forc'd to draw in my horns, and be silent; lest the villains, being thirsty, should force the shaver to operation. The knave, indeed, was five weavers off, and so could not well come at me; I might otherwise have been drunk up alive.

Dol. Indeed, my witty knight, you was match'd.

Fal. Wasn't I, Dol?

Dol. And pray how cam'st thou off at last, Sir John?

Fal. By mere providence: for, after the barbarous rascals had squeeze'd the breath out of my body, they buffetted me because I could not roar out, God save the king. At length, I know not how, they threw me down in the cloisters, where, falling cross-wise and the way being narrow, I fairly block'd up the passage: upon which (for they could not straddle over me) they took another way (a plague go with them!) for fear of losing the show. And thus I was left to take in wind, and gather myself up at leisure.

Dol. And did the mangy villains so play upon thy sackbut? so maul this poor round-belly? a parcel of sapless twigs! dry elms, fit only for fuel! I would I had the burning of them.

Fal. Wouldst thou fire them, Dol? Ha! art thou touchwood still, Dol?

Dol. Nay, Sir John, not so.

Quick. No, I'll be sworn, Sir John, to my carnal knowledge, if there be truth or faith in medicine. But Sir John, what would your honour please to have for supper?

Fal. Another glats of therres—fill me out, Bardolph. I cannot eat. I have lost my appetite by the way. Put an egg into a quart of mull'd sack, and give it me when I am a-bed. I will to sleep.

Dol. Would you have your bed prepar'd, straight, Sir John?

Fal. Ay, on the instant, good Dol. Hostess! go thou and see to the brewage of my sack.

[*Exeunt Dol. and Mrs. Quickly.*]

S C E N E

SCENE X. *Tavern continued.*

Enter Peto, leading in Pistol, groaning and hanging his head.

Fal. Heigh ; heigh ; whose other mare's dead ?

Pistol. Come, Clotho, Atropos, and sisters three !
Wind up my web ; for Pistol's flash is out.

Fal. What is the matter, Peto ?

Peto. Matter, Sir John ! The mob at Westminster have almost murder'd poor Pistol, here. I thought I never should have been able to get him home alive.

Fal. And how so ?

Peto. Why, Sir John, being got upon a cobbler's bulk to see what was become of your honour, a raw-bon'd swaggering serjeant, that was coming by, whipt hold of him by the leg, and threw him on the people's heads ; where, being no room for him to come to the ground, they shoulder'd him about from post to pillar, as they would have done a hedge-hog, or a dead rabbit that had been thrown among them. I faith, I thought they would have kill'd him.

Fal. How ! was that Pistol ? I saw the bustle at a distance, but took the cause of it for some huge boar cat, the porters and 'prentices had got, to make sport withal. By the Lord, Pistol, I have a fellow-feeling for thy misfortunes. But art thou hurt ? where art thou wounded ?

Pistol. Ah, luckless knight ! is merit thus repaid ?
Doth fortune play the jilt with men of mould ?
Then Pistol lay thy head in Parco's lap.

Fal. Good ancient, let me advise thee to hie to bed, and lay thy head on a pillow.—Peto, see to him.—I too will follow.—Bardolph !

Light me to bed—let Dol bring up the sack,
Empty the jorden, and tuck up my back.

[Exeunt.]

A C T

ACT III. SCENE I.

An Antechamber.

Enter Lord Scroop and Friar.

Scroop. **B**Y th' holy rood, an early riser, father.
Friar. Each morn, my lord, at crowing of
the cock,

It is her wonted custom thus in pray'r
To usher in the day. But see she comes.

[Enter Eleanor Poins, reading.]

Scroop. How fair a penitent! good friar excuse us.
I have a farewell errand from his highness,
Intended only for this lady's ear.

Friar. My lord, I leave her with you. *[Exit Friar.]*

SCENE II. *Antechamber continued.*

Lord Scroop and Eleanor.

Scroop. So early, gentle fair one, at your orisons!

Elea. Is't not, my lord, my duty to prepare
For th' holy state my fortune waits t' embrace,
By prior acts of penitence and prayer?

Scroop. O cruel fortune! is't for blooming youth
To spend its prime amidst the doleful gloom
Of spleenful solitude; shut from the world,
And from the golden joys that wait on beauty?

Elea. Alas, my lord, my days of joy are pass'd;
I have indeed possess'd too great a share,
And all are fled. But of my lord, the king;
What errands need such honourable messengers?

Scroop. How cruel is't to rob the world's fair garden
Of flowers so sweet to sense and choice as this!

[Half aside.]

Lady, indeed, with pain I recollect
The hated terms of my ungrateful message:
For little those of chiding and reproof
Suit Masham's gentle nature. Yet the king,

Anger'd

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Anger'd to see what others joy to look on,
Hath sent me to remind you of his pleasure,
And hasten your retirement from the world.
Your late appearance at his coronation,
It seems, hath much offended.

Elean. Could that, my lord, be deem'd so great a crime?

To wish to see my Henry's face again,
Ere yet I bade the flatt'ring world adieu ;
To take one parting look, to drop a tear,
And bid him, with mine eyes, farewell for ever ?

Scroop. Princes, alas! are not like other men ;
At least so flatt'ers buz it in their ears :
While o'er their hearts vain pride usurps dominion,
And all the gentler passions fall before it.

Elea. I see, my lord, indeed, I see it now.
Say, 'twas a fault, my failing heart betray'd me ;
Yet 'twas a venial fault ; the fault of love.

Scroop. The king affects to think you disobedient.

E'ea. And was I ever disobedient to him ?

His will to me was evermore a law ;
And shall be still : for, tho' he cast me off,
No other's pleasure will I study ever.
Let him not think I wish to disobey him ;
Or feel one pang, in parting from the world,
But from the wounds receiv'd by his displeasure.
Let him not think I valued but his love ;
His fame, his honour, equally were dear ;
And mine I've made a sacrifice to both.

Scroop. O had possession of so rich a prize,
Such store of beauty, tenderness and truth
But fell to Mafham's lot ; tho' twice a king,
I would have worn it ever next my heart,
More priz'd than all the jewels in my crown !

E'ea. O flatter not, my lord, so Henry flatter'd :
So vow'd the prince, when, sighing at my feet,
He won my easy, unsuspecting heart.

Scroop. O wrong me not ; nor wrong those heav'nly charms.

Perdition catch me if I meant to flatter.

E'ea. What means, my lord ?

Scroop.

Scroop. For Henry's heart, you've lost,
To give you mine ; a heart that cannot change.
Accept it, love, nor say th' exchange is poor ;
For constancy o'erballances a crown.

Elea. My lord, farewell—is this thy hated errand ?
Hated indeed, if Henry sent thee on it.
Thou art employ'd, I see, to try my heart :
It is the king's till his unkindness break it.
Ah how unkind ! so kind while yet a prince !
If thus a golden crown can steel his heart,
O may I ne'er behold him while a king !
No—be some humble cell my future lot,
Princes and kings, and all but heaven forgot.

[*Exit Eleanor.*]

SCENE III. *Antechamber continued.*

Scroop, solus.

Not yet, my fair one : thou must first be mine ;
Or I am wide the mark of woman's will.
I have a tale shall work upon the king
To give in charge this wanton up to me ;
And if there's ought of woman left about her,
I shall find out the means to touch her heart,
And teach her kinder maxims ere we part.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV. *Tavern in Eastcheap.*

Enter Falstaff and Bardolph.

Fal. What time of day is it, Bardolph ?

Bar. Almost eleven, Sir John.

Fal. Then have I taken two sound naps of eight hours
a-piece. How is it with Pistol to day ?

Bar. Why, he's in a bad way, Sir John.

Fal. That all !—when was he otherwise ? who ever
knew Pistol or thee in a good way ?

Bar. And yet, Sir John, we are your followers, you
know.

Fal. Well said, Bardolph.—I see thy wit is improv'd.
I lead you the way, it is true ; but you follow me, like
spaniels, with damnable circumvolutions. But, whom
have we here ?

Bar.

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Bar. It is the doctor, Sir John, that has been up to see Pistol.

Fal. O, doctor Mithridate, the apothecary! a precious rascal!
[Enter Apothecary.]

SCENE V. *Tavern continued.*

Falstaff, Bardolph, and Apothecary.

Fal. So, master 'pothecary, thou art a man of merit, I see. Thou art sought after.—How many patients hast thou dispatch'd to day?

Apo. Not many, Sir John, I visited your friend Pistol early, and flatter myself he is in a fair way.

Fal. Bardolph tells me he is in a bad one: fair and good I have heard; but fair and bad never. But pray what are his complaints, master doctor? I know something of physick.

Apo. Why, Sir John, the cutis of the occiput is dilacerated; there are tumors all over the corpus; the patient has a delirium, a vertigo, and besides the febrile symptoms indicate phlebotomy.

Fal. Phlebotomy! what, bleeding?

Apo. A little, Sir John—we will only take from him sixteen ounces.

Fal. Sixteen ounces! hast thou a design upon his life? What, a plague, wouldst thou kill him? He doth not weigh four pounds averdupoize, flesh, bones, and all; and thou wouldst take him away by quarterns in a sloop-bason.

Apo. I hope, Sir John, you will not go about to instruct me in the pathology, the therapeutice, the indications and contra-indications. The patient must be bled.

Fal. Bleed sick apes and hyp'd monkeys. I tell thee my ancient shall die a natural death. Thinkest thou I will have his veins drain'd to fill a row of porringers in a barber's shop-window? Use bits of red cloth and be damn'd; ye shall have the blood of no follower of mine. Sixteen ounces! I tell thee not Galen, Hippocrates, nor Esculapius himself, were they alive, should thus operate upon him. Phlebotomy! I will phlebotomize ye all with my rapier, by the Lord, if you offer to draw a lancet on him.

Apo.

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Apo. Well, well, Sir John, we will take less; but some his case absolutely requires: and in fact, Sir John, if you yourself, being of such a plethorick habit, would lose a little blood, it would not be amiss.

Fal. Me! I thank thee. In the blood is the life of the creature, and I will not consent to part with mine.

Apo. It were better also, Sir John, if you drank a little more water in your wine.

Fal. More water! I drink none.

Apo. So much the worse, Sir John, better you did

Fal. And wouldst thou persuade me, with thy contraindications, that water is better than wine?

Apo. For some constitutions, and in some cases, yes, Sir John.

Fal. For thine perhaps: but mine thanks thee for thy water. Wine is good enough for me.

Apo. You will not take my advice, Sir John, and so good day to ye.

Fal. Good day to you master, doctor, 'pothecary.

[Exit Apothecary.]

SCENE VI. *Tavern continued.*

Falstaff and Bardolph.

Fal. And yet I know not whether I ought to wish that neither; for a good day to him must be a bad one to somebody. A man of any conscience, or humanity, knows not how to salute fellows of such an occupation: for who would wish the rest of mankind lame and blind, sick and sorry to find them employment, forsooth? Poor Pistol! I would not lose him, methinks; for, tho' he be a bragadocio knave, he is an old acquaintance; and I never could find in my heart to part with old acquaintance merely because they were good for nothing. King Hal is another sort of a man to what I am, to abandon his old friends in his prosperity thus. Poor Pistol!

Bar. Ecod, Sir John it happen'd lucky for me, I can tell ye, that I came off so well as I did, yesterday.

Fal. Ay, by'r lady, thou playd'st fair to get off in a whole skin, and leave thy friend and master in extremity.

Bar. Nay 'pon my honour, Sir John, I did my utmost to keep up with you: but twas impossible; and indeed it

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was very fortunable that I was not myself trod to death by the populous.

Fal. Thou! tell me the moon is a Suffolk cheefe or a Windfor pear. Thou! Have I not seen thee clear the ring, without a staff at a bear-baiting? Thou might'st make thy way through a legion. nay the millions of a croifade: why, who would come within a fathom of that fire-brand, thy nose? It is as a flaming two-edged sword. Wouldst thou make me believe the vil'ains would come near thee, to burn their holiday cloths? Thou wouldst have set them a-blazing like stubble and have consum'd the whole procession of heralds, like men of straw. A plague upon them, it was in their avoiding thee. I suppose, that I had like to have died a martyr to compulency.

Bar. Sir John, you are always plaguing me about my face; what would you have me do with it?

Fal. Do with it! If there were water enough in the Thames, I would have thee quench it. But water, I fear, can do nothing for thee; since I remember, when we rode last from Canterbury, with the rain beating full in our faces, thou cam'st into the borough with thy nose and cheeks glowing red-hot, altho' they had been hissing all the way like a horse-shoe or a tailor's goose. God forgive me—but when thou rann'st behind the hedge, in fear of the officer; I could not help comparing him and thee to Moses and the burning bush. But thou wilt in time be consumed: thy fire must out.

Bar. I would it were out, so be I might hear no more on't. In troth, Sir John, if I must be always your butt, I shall seek another service I assure ye.

Fal. Nay, nay, good Bardolph, that must not be. I speak not in disparagement, heav'n knows: for I mean to cherish thee against the lack of fuel, or the visitation of a Dutch winter. Thou wilt stand me in good stead for a stove, and save me a noble a week in the purchase of pit-coal.

Bar. 'Sblood, Sir John, I'll bear it no longer. [*Going.*]

Fal. Hold, Bardolph, where art thou going? thou glow-worm in magnature with thy tail upwards; thou pumpkin-headed rascal, stay, or——

Bar. Give me good words, then, Sir John. Why pumpkin-head, pray now?

Fal.

Fal. Hast thou never seen a pumpon fantastically carv'd and set over a candle's-end, on a gate-post, to frighten ale-wives from gossiping by owl-light? That is a type of thee—That is thy emblem; thy head being hollow, full of light, and easily broken; as thou shalt experience, if thou offer'st to fly thy colours till disbanded by authority. I shall need thee, I tell thee, to keep me warm under the coldness of the king's displeasure.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John, burnt sack and ginger will do you more good: for whatsoever light I may give, I am sure, set aside choler, I am as cold as e'er a white-liver'd younker in town.

Fal. Cold, say'st thou! thy face would condemn thee for an incendiary before any bench of judicature in the kingdom! thou wouldst carry apparent combustibles into court with thee. Tell not me of cold. Thou wouldst certainly have been hang'd long ago, had not the sheriff been afraid thou wouldst have fir'd the hangman or the gibbet.

Bar. Why, Sir John, I have been your attendant off and on these twenty years, come Candlemas; and I don't find I have had any such effect on you.

Fal. The reason, you rogue, the reason; am not I oblig'd to keep a pipe of Canary constantly discharging on me? Are not the tapsters perpetually employ'd? the sack-buckets for ever a going, to keep me from blazing? And yet at times my skin is shrivell'd up like an April pippin. Mark me but walking an hundred paces, with thee glowing at my heels, if I do not broil and drip like a roasting ox.

Bar. Ah, you are pleas'd to be hard upon me, Sir John, but I'm sure my face never hurt a hair of your head.

Fal. No! look at 'em—hath it not turn'd them all grey? Twenty years ago, before they were calcin'd by thy fire, my locks were of a nut-brown.

Bar. Why you grow old, Sir John.

Fal. Old! what call ye old? I am a little more than threescore: and Methusalem liv'd to near a thousand. Why may not I be a patriarch, and beget sons and daughters these hundred years, myself?

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Bar. Then you must get a wife, Sir John, for your common fields, you know, never bear clover.

Fal. Marry! what to be made a cuckold of, I warrant ye?

Bar. Why, Sir John, if you should marry, you would not like to be singular, I suppose.

Fal. Nay, for the matter of that, all's one: but who will have me? Your dames of breeding are too fine and fricking for me to bear with them.

Bar. Ay, or for them to bear you, either, Sir John.

Fal. Nay, whoever has me, she must be no tenderling: she must be none of your gingerbread lasses, that will crumble to pieces in the towzling. She must be none of your wisby-washy, panada, gentry neither; your curd and whey gentlefolks, that cannot support the embraces of a soldier. I must have a kicky-wicksey of more substantial stuff.

Bar. Why, Sir John, what say you to Madam Ursula, your old sweetheart? You have courted her to my knowledge these twenty years last past. I suppose you know her great aunt is dead, and has left her four hundred marks a year.

Fal. No, by the lord. I heard nothing on't. She sent me a letter, indeed, into Gloucestershire; but, I was over a bottle, and would not interrupt the glass to read it. I knew it was hers by the superscription, which by the way, however, was as unintelligible as the hand-writing on the wall. It had never reached me had not the bearer been a decypherer. Go, Bardolph, and fetch it: you will find it among other trumpery in my cloak-bag.

[Exit Bardolph.]

SCENE VII. *Tavern continued.*

Falstaff solus.

Four hundred marks a year, quoth he! It were not an unreasonable competence were not sherris comparatively so dear. But if the female incumbrance on it should turn out a firew; the Lord have mercy on me, in paying off the sins of my youth. Let me bethink me. Four hundred marks a year! I have, it is true, small hopes from Hal; and shall grow old some time or other.

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other. These aches in my limbs forebode it. I cannot hold out for ever; that's certain. Were it not good, therefore, to make a virtue of necessity, and take up while I am in case to reap the credit of reformation? Could I reconcile it to my interest, I believe my inclination would follow.

SCENE VIII. *Tavern continued.*

Re-enter Bardolph.

Bar. There, Sir John, is the letter.

Fal. Come on: let us see if we are master of so much Arabick as to find out her meaning. (*Reads.*) Hum—hum—hum—! Why, dame Ursula, thou hast a memory. I could have credited thee for subtilty, on account of that old friend to woman, the serpent: but how thou couldst remember for fifteen years together what money I owed thee—that indeed I cannot account for. I have myself forgot it long since. She tells me here, I have borrow'd five hundred pounds of her at times, as tokens of my love. By the Lord, and as I am a soldier, I will love her still, and she shall command semblable proofs of it. (*Reads on*) Hum—hum—Repayment of the money or the performance of my engagements! Hoo! Am I then to be married on compulsion? That will go most damnably against the grain. But hold—if I marry, her money will be mine: if not, she may cease to lend when she pleases: and the fortune of that man is always at the turning of the tide that depends on the caprice of a woman.

Bar. Why marry her, then, Sir John. I dare say she has heard nothing of your disgrace at court; so that she won't stand upon terms.

Fal. Marry, Bardolph, and I am half resolv'd to do so. Yea, by the Lord, and I will too. She has besides two thousand pounds in money, I will courageously make the attack and mount the breach of matrimony. If I fall into the hands of Philistines; why, goodnight. It is but going into purgatory a few years before my time. Bardolph, get me pen and ink, in the Cupid. Thou shalt be one of love's messengers—I will write to her in trope

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and figure : metaphor and hyperbole carry all before them with the women. Let her resist lyes and nonsense if she can.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX. *An Apartment at Court.*

Enter King Henry, the Earl of Cambridge, and Lord Scroop.

King. (*Entering to Scroop*) I thank thee, Scroop ; and to thy zeal and care

Commit the business of fair Nell's disposal.

Mean time, my lord, on more important matter

I need your honest counsel. — My good lord Cambridge

Will give me too his thoughts upon the business.

Cam. My liege, you do me honour.

King. Not a whit.

You heard what late th' archbishop mov'd, in council,
Respecting the disposal of church benefices.

His grace has laid a paper since before us,

Wherein he stands up stoutly for his temporals.

Scroop. Doubtless, my liege, if churchmen had their will,

The best of them would never give consent

To strip the church of its o'ergrown possessions,

Tho' half the nation's wealth were in her hands.

King. But what is thy opinion, honest Scroop ?

Is't not injustice to deprive the church

Of those possessions dying men have will'd

By legal testament ?

Scroop. The publick good, I hold, my sov'reign liege,

To be the first great rule of right and wrong :

The rights of individuals hence are sacred

No longer than conducing to the publick.

Is't for your majesty's, or England's honour

That half our glebe be holden by the church,

To fatten monks, and pamper lazy friars,

That swarm like pestful locusts o'er the land ?

King. What saith my lord of Cambridge ?

Cam. The point, my liege, is truly nice and tender.

So deep the interest of the church is rooted,

While such regard implicitly it claims,

From ev'ry true believer, that I doubt

If such a step can with success be taken.

I own

I own, I never profited as yet
 From aught that Wickliff, or his tribe, have taught;
 Holding it sacrilege to rob the church.

Scroop. Not more than I, my pious earl of Cambridge;
 Nor have I profited by Wickliff's doctrine.
 But who will call a den of thieves the church?
 Why hold we Edwards memory so dear,
 But that thou knowest in his glorious reign
 The famous mortmain statute was enacted:
 Happy for England that had else, ere now,
 A nation been of monasteries and churches,
 Paying allegiance to its king the pope.

King. Ay, Scroop, there lies the fore. The king, our
 father,
 Out of a holy zeal to mother church,
 Slacken'd the reins of that prerogative
 The Edwards held so tight upon the clergy.
 Hence new encroachments, and a bold contempt,
 Of our authority, from Rome.

Cam. As touching this, my liege, the holy see
 Has doubtless gone too far, in granting cures
 To monks and laymen, and in dispensations
 For their non-residence, and other articles
 Injurious to the honour of the crown.

Scroop. Nor less injurious to its interest, Cambridge.
 Believe me, Rome consults its profits more
 Than that our priests deserve the cure of souls!
 Say to what end the clergy should be rich,
 But to lay out their wealth where it improves.
 I do not mean in heav'n my gracious liege:
 They lay not up in store their treasures there:
 But where preferments may be bought—at Rome.
 It is to Rome their plate and moneys fly,
 To see ecclesiastick sycophants;
 To nurse rebellion; and inflame the minds
 Of bigot subjects 'gainst their lawful sovereigns.

Cam. My liege, the dukes of York and Exeter,
 With the young princes, pass along the gallery.

King. Go, bid them in. *[Exit Cambridge.]*
Scroop, let this subject of the clergy rest;
 I will resume it at a proper season.
 And hold thee farther question on the matter.

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SCENE X. *Apartment continued.*

Enter Cambridge, with the Dukes of Gloucester, Bedford, Clarence, York, and Exeter.

King. Well, my good lords, what is the news o' th' day?

Hear we yet nothing from our brother Charles,
Concerning those same dukedoms we've requir'd,
O'er which he lords it in our realm of France?

York. As yet, my liege, we've naught but vague reports.

These say, indeed, the haughty French affect
To treat your highness' claim with proud disdain:
That Charles refer'd your envoys to the dauphin;
Whose messengers, already on the way,
May hourly be expected.

King. To the dauphin! I sent them to the king.

York. Most true, my liege,
But going hence before your coronation,
'Tis said weak Charles has taken thence occasion
To cast affront upon your royalty.

King. 'Tis well. The dauphin's answer shall suffice.
Would it were come: I long, methinks, to hear
The message Charles himself disdain'd to send.
I would not, for his sake, it should give cause
To make him blush for his young heir's discretion.
Our cousin's wit, we're told, is passing shrewd,
Tho' oft ill-tim'd, and hurtful to his friends.
Let him beware—mine was no idle errand:
And well deserv'd a king's most serious answer.

Exeter. The son's discretion yet may match the fire's;
Who, with such unadvised affectation,
Presumes to treat your majesty so lightly.

Scroop. Affect contempt! a skipping meagre tribe!
And shall the ape unpunish'd mock the lion?
By heav'n, my liege, I would so well chastise them——

King. My lords, our judgment hold we in suspense
Until these French ambassadors arrive.
For heav'n defend we should, in pride or wantonness,
Awake the fury of grim-visag'd war,
To wave her bloody banner o'er a kingdom,

And

And reap, with th' sword, the harvest of destruction.

Yet, to say truth, I cannot flatter me

So fierce and formidable a pow'r as France,

At once, will yield to part with her possessions,

In pure regard to justice and our right,

Restoring quietly, upon demand,

Those fertile dukedoms, seignories, and towns,

That add the greatest lustre to the crown,

And constitute the strength of half the kingdom.

York. On that most politick and just suspicion,

Wisely your highness doth augment your forces ;

Levying new pow'rs, to keep in awe the Scots,

And in your absence curb domestick broils ;

While, taking meet advantage of the time,

You may by force acquire what force detains.

King. Uncle, this is most needful—see we, therefore,

Our warlike preparations do not flag.

Be we prepar'd, that, as occasion serve,

We may transport our powers across the main,

And on the spot our rightful cause maintain. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XI. *An Apartment.*

Dame Uriula, and Bridget attending.

Urf. And do you think, Bridget, Sir John will at last be as good as his word, then ? How sits my ruff to day ? I would thou hadst bought me one of those new-fashioned farthingales.

Brid. O, madam, you are mighty fine, as it is, truly : and, I am sure, Sir John can do nothing less than admire you.

Urf. Thinkest thou so, Bridget ? why, to be certain, a peach-colour'd sattin does become my complexion hugely. But I think the roses are faded in my cheeks. Well, no matter : he might have gather'd them twenty years ago, had not he been a rover. I hope, however, he has sown all his wild oats before now, and that I shall yet have the satisfaction to be call'd my lady Falstaff.

Brid. To be sure, madam ; and tho' Sir John is but a knight at present, he will very assuredly, now the young king is crown'd, be made a great lord, and may be a duke. Indeed, madam, I cannot think of less.

Urf.

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Urf. And then shall I be a dutchess, Bridget. Dame Ursula a dutchess!

Brid. Ay, madam, that will be a day to see; if I am so happy as to be in your grace's favour.

Urf. For certain, Bridget, thou shalt. Well, I must confess, in spite of my bluthes, I do love Sir John Falstaff. How like a scholar and a gentleman he writes.

[Takes out a letter and reads.]

"To my soul's idol, the mirror of love and constancy." Constancy! he might well say constancy: for who among the gill-flirts of these days has reserv'd, like myself, the same affection for the same man for twenty years together? It is true, indeed, I have not had any other offer, in the mean time: but that doubtless has been owing to my supposed engagements with Sir John; that frighten'd away all other young cavaliers. Well this love is a strange thing! there is Sir John has deceiv'd me a thousand times, and yet I know not how, he always persuaded me he was sincere.

Brid. A sure sign you lov'd him, madam.

Urf. And yet, to be sure, before I receiv'd this letter, I thought I never should hear from him again, and had almost come to a resolution to cast him entirely off.

Brid. In good sooth, madam, and that is very prudent; to cast off a lover when we find he will leave us.

Urf. I think so, and not a little imprudent to do it before, for one of my years at least.

B id. Why, madam, you are not so old.

Urf. Indeed, but I am—old enough to know I ought not to part with one lover 'till I am sure of another.

Brid. To be sure, madam, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; but the sport of hampering the rogues, who are at liberty, is so vastly pretty.

Urf. Ay, if we were sure of catching them at last: but, Bridget, Bridget, how often do they escape through our fingers and give us the slip! Besides it is for younger lasse than I to go bird-catching.—I cannot throw salt on the tail of a sparrow now.

Brid. O, madam, we shall see that. Sir John will be here presently.

Urf. Bless us, Bridget, here he comes. Introduce him and leave us.

[Exit Bridget.]

S C E N E

SCENE XII. *Same Apartment continued.*

Enter Falstaff.

Fal. Well, my fair princess, see thy wand'ring knight.

Urf. Welcome to London, Sir John; thou art indeed a wanderer.

Fal. A true knight-errant for thy sake.

Urf. For my sake, Sir John?

Fal. Ay, for thine, my Helen. Have I not encounter'd tremendous giants and fiery dragons, in the rebels of Northumberland and Wales? And then for magicians and enchanted castles: Owen Glendower and his Welch devils we put to the rout; and many a strong-hold between here and West-Chester have I visited, releasing fair damsels and distressed 'squires from captivity. I brought two of the latter up to town; I would they were safely immur'd in the country again.

Urf. And all these exploits for me, Sir John?

Fal. As I am a true knight, to lay my laurels at thy feet.

Urf. Do you then still love me in sincerity, Sir John?

Fal. Do I love thee? Am I a foldier? Have I courage? Love thee; I will be thy Troilus, and thou shalt be my Cressida.

Urf. You have long told me so, indeed.

Fal. And can I lye? Thou shalt be sole possessor of my person and wealth. Thou shalt share in the honours done me at the court of the new king. Thou shalt—but what shalt thou not do? We will be married incontinently.

Urf. O, Sir John, you know your own power and our sex's weakness: but indeed for decency I cannot so speedily consent. Besides, Sir John, I am not yet put into possession of my estate and moneys.

Fal. Nay then, as thou sayst, love, for decency's sake, we must bear with a short delay: but I will no longer be kept out of possession than thou art.

Urf. You shall not, Sir John: and, in the mean time, our lawyers shall confer on the terms of our marriage.

Fal.

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Fal. I hate lawyers. Let a priest suffice. Am not I a man of honour?

To do thee less than justice were a sin.
Give me thy lips; we'll settle all within.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Tavern in Eastcheap.

Sir John Falstaff, sitting at a Table. Enter Bardolph.

Bar. **S**IR John, here is the hobbling friar again, that has been so often to ask after you. Shall we say you are at home?

Fal. Ay, let him in. What can the gouty precisian want with me? *[Enter Friar.]*

Friar. Peace be with you. Sir John. God save ye.

Fal. Thank thee, good father. What is your reverence's will?

Fri. I think thou dost not know me, Sir John. It is indeed many years since our personal intimacy: your way of life and mine——

Fal. Were something different, father, to be sure: and tho' I may have seen you before, it is so long since I have been at th'ist, that I must crave your pardon if I have totally forgot ye. And yet your reverence may be my ghostly father, for ought I know.

Fri. Fie, fie, Sir John, a man of your age and gravity.

Fal. Hoh! if your business be to chide me, I shut mine ears.

Fri. If you will not admit your wound to be prob'd; how can you expect to be cur'd, Sir John?

Fal. Cur'd! 'sblood, I took thee for a priest, and I find thou art a surgeon.

Fri. A spiritual one. Sir John; and such as your disorder requires.

Fal. Dost thou know my case then? A spiritual surgeon sayst thou? I am not given over by the surgeons bodily yet. Who call in the divine till they have sent out the doctor?

Fri.

Fri. I know your case well, Sir John. It is perhaps less your body than your mind that is infected.

Fal. Nay, like enough I have indeed been damnably dispirited ever since the king's coronation. A confounded melancholy hangs upon me like a quotidian ague.

Fri. It is that melancholy, and the cause of it, Sir John, I would remove.

Fal. And how wouldst thou remove it? By providing me with a charge of horse, and restoring me to the king's favour. I know no other way.

Fri. By inducing thee to repent, and be restor'd to the favour of the King of kings; which thou hast forfeited by a dissolute and abandoned life. Dost thou not think thou art in a state of reprobation?

Fal. Pray, friar, by what authority dost thou take upon thee to catechise me? Dost thou come out of mere charity, or art thou employ'd by thy superiors?

Fri. Suppose the former, Sir John.

Fal. Suppose the former, father friar, why then the devil is so strong in me, that I should be tempted to throw thee headlong down stairs for thy charitable impertinence.

Fri. Thy ill-manners, Sir John, would be inexcusable, were it not to be supposed the consequence of an habitual antipathy to ev'ry thing that is good. But, I will not lay claim to greater merit than is my due. I am come by order of my Lord-chief-justice; who is so much your friend as to interest himself in your reformation.

Fal. My Lord-chief-justice! that's another matter. I cry thee mercy, reverend father. I find thou'rt not the man I took thee for. Your reverence does me honour; and I profess I am much indebted to his lordship's kind love and regard to my soul's health.

Fri. You'll hear me then, Sir John.

Fal. Yea, heav'n forbid I should not—what I said was meant against those officious zealots, who are so forward to pry into mens consciences that will not bear the looking into.

Fri. Sir John, we know your failings; and shall not put you to the trouble of auricular confession at present.

Fal. There, friar, thou win'st my heart. Come sit thee down. Wilt drink a glass of sack?

Fri. I never do, Sir John.

Fal. I cry thee mercy, then. Here is to your reverence's health ; and now, I'll tell thee what, — I do protest I sit me now upon the stool of repentance, and have been honestly deliberating, some time past, to change my course of life. I am heartily tir'd of it. Indeed, I am, good father.

Fri. I am glad to find thee in such promising dispositions, and think thou couldst not do better than to betake thyself, agreeable to his lordship's intentions, to some monastery, where thou wilt be secluded from temptations, and have all spiritual assistance to encourage thee to mortify the desires of the flesh.

Fal. Hold thee there, good father. Let me understand thee. What ! would his lordship make a monk of me ? I must there beg his pardon. A monk ; and to mortify the flesh ! For heav'n's sake, good father, consider what a mortification indeed that must be to me, who have six times the quantity of any other man. If I must be included within the pale of the church, why not make a canon of me (not indeed a minor canon) but a prebendary, or a bishop, now. Something might be said for either of these. But for a monk ! I know not any thing I am less fit for ; unless indeed his lordship had meant to make a running footman of me.

Fri. Nay, Sir John, his lordship will not use compulsion in this. He will not so far lay a restraint on your inclinations.

Fal. O, if I ever find myself that way inclin'd ; his lordship may depend on it I shall be as ready as ever to follow my inclinations. But the lesson of lean and fallow abstinence is very long and hard, good father ; I am not gotten half-way through the first chapter yet.

Fri. Some steps, however, Sir John, you must take, toward a more reputable way of life ; and that speedily too : otherwise you will be stript of the honours of knighthood ; and the king's sentence of banishment will be strictly put into execution against you.

Fal. As to the matter of knighthood ; once a knight and always a knight, you know. The king may make as many knights as he he pleases ; but he will not so easily unmake them again. My title will not depend on the king's

king's courtesy, but on that of my followers. I am, notwithstanding, very desirous to give his lordship satisfaction: and do assure thee, on the honour of a soldier, of the sincerity of my repentance.

Fri. And yet this may be only a transitory penitence, owing to your late disappointment. What reason canst thou give me to hope this state of mind will continue?

Fal. Why, father, what I am shortly going to do is an act, that has confin'd many a man to a state of repentance, which hath continued to the last hour of his life.

Fri. This, Sir John, is saying something. Pray what are you going to do?

Fal. I have taken a resolution, father, to———What dost thou think now it is I have resolv'd upon?

Fri. Some commendable act of penance, no doubt.

Fal. Nay, it may well be call'd so, I believe. I am determin'd, good father, to marry.

Fri. Call you that an act of penance, Sir John? Is marriage a state of mortification?

Fal. I wish I may not find it so.

Fri. Well, Sir John, marriage is a holy state; and in some degree I approve your resolution; but, in the estimation of the church, it is also an holy act, and ought not to be enter'd into unadvisedly. Your repentance should precede your receiving the benefit of that sacrament.

Fal. O, doubt not but I shall repent me sufficiently afterwards.

Fri. Ah! Sir John, Sir John, I fear me you are no true penitent: but, however, it may be lawful to salve what cannot be effectually cur'd. I did not expect to make a convert at the first interview. If thou takest any measures that tend tow'rd reformation, thou shalt have my prayers and best assistance therein. Another time I will hold farther conversation with thee.

Fal. In the mean time, good father, let me stand fair in your report to my Lord-chief-justice and his majesty.

Fri. Thou shalt stand fairer than I fear thou deservest.
Farewel.

[Exit Friar.]

SCENE II. *Tavern continued.*Falstaff, *solus.*

Fare thee well, good father friar. What an hypocritical puritan! Would not drink sack! Not with the ungodly I suppose. But I am damnably mistaken, if he be not indebted for that rosy countenance and the gout, to the penetrating qualities of old theriac. Bardolph! get ready to attend me forth. I'll tow'rd St. Paul's. *[Exit.]*

SCENE III. *An Apartment at Court.**Enter King, Lord Scroop, and others.*

King. The French ambassadors! they shall have audience.

But first we shall dispatch the saucy legate.

Lord. My liege, he comes; and with my lords the bishops.

SCENE IV. *Apartment continued.*

Enter Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope's Legate, and other Bishops.

Arch. Heav'n show'r its choicest blessings on your majesty.

May conquest, honour, peace, and length of days,
Attend your glorious reign. My liege, the nuncio.

King. Well, my lord cardinal, your reverence
Hath fresh dispatches from the court of Rome:
What is their tenour?

Leg. Such as well becomes
The court of Rome, his holiness our master,
The delegate of heav'n, and first in power
Of all the kings and princes in the world;
Him at whole feet obedient monarchs bow,
As unto God's vice gerent here on earth.
In substance this—your majesty must yield—

Scroop. Must! lordly priest! Where didst thou learn
thy manners?

That word will work.

[Aside.]

Leg. Lord, where didst thou? I spoke unto the king.

King.

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King. Lord Scroop your love and zeal make you too bold.

Scroop. Your highness pardon me ; but you're too good
To grant an audience to th' ill-manner'd priest,
Who dares to cast such insult upon majesty.
Must yield, my liege !

King. Proceed, lord cardinal.

Leg. In few, king Henry, nothing will his holiness
Abate of those pretensions he hath founded,
Respecting the disposal of church gifts,
And the provisions made by th' holy see
For any priest or bishop in the realm :
By me enjoining, hence, the king of England
To put them peaceably in full possession
Of all the temporalities, that now,
Or heretofore, were known to them belonging.

King. And all this must be done.

Scroop. Ay must, my liege.

King. Enough. — Lord cardinal, we understand ye. —
And as we labour here in some necessity ———

Leg. Yet more : his holiness requires that law
Should be repeal'd, which now declares it treason
To levy contributions on the clergy,
For spiritual use, without consent of parliament.

King. 'Tis well ; thus much for us, and now for you.
Your excellence must take that loyal oath
Your predecessor took in Richard's time ; —
Dost thou remember't, uncle Exeter ?

Exet. It is, my liege, that he shall neither act,
Permit, or cause whatever to be acted,
That's detrimental to the king's prerogative,
Or laws o' th' kingdom : that he'd execute
No bulls or mandates hurtful to your person,
The rights o' th' crown, and legal constitution :
And more particularly never send
Our jewels, plate, and monies hence abroad,
Without a license from the king and council.

King. This, my lord cardinal, for you : the rest
We'll send by special envoy to the pope.

Leg. In pose an oath on me ! mistaken prince !
I am a servant to the King of heav'n ;

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And owe allegiance unto none but him,
And to his representative at Rome.

King. See that thou take this oath in three days time,
Or henceforth let me see thy face no more;
But leave our kingdom as you prize your life.
Nay, make me no reply. I'll hear no more.

[*Exit King and Lords.*]

SCENE V. *Continued.*

Manent Archbishop of Canterbury, Legate, and other Bishops.

Arch. Lord cardinal, you are too bold and peremptory.
Did not I tell you this was not your way;
That Henry was not to be intimidated?

Leg. You did. I have indeed o'ershot the mark;
I see the error now. But say, my lord,
What's to be done?

Arch. For Rome, I fear not much: for, as for us,
Of England's clergy, we can aid you little.
We shall have much to do to save ourselves.
Nay, to do this, I see no other means
Than that of giving such a mighty sum,
As may suffice the present wants o' th' court.
This may perhaps defer the evil day,
In which the laity will strip the church.
But let's my lords to Lambeth: there are met
Our other rev'rend brethren, the lords bishops;
There we'll commune together on our grievances.

[*Exeunt all but the Legate.*]

SCENE VI. *Continued.*

Legate, solus.

And is it thus? I then will take this oath.
For hence I will not, till this upstart king
Shall stoop, and kiss the rod of my correction.
No, I will slay and sow the seeds of discord,
Till, like the fabled dragon's teeth of old,
They shoot up into rebels' arms against him.
The imprisonment Mortimer, the legal heir's
A pious friend to Rome. He shall be king;

Or

Or I will spread so wide the fence of blood,
That England shall be one continued slaughter-house.
The French despite the law of stripping's claims,
And doubtless will assist in good work.
I'll get a mandate from the Pope from Rome,
That shall absolve his subjects of allegiance.
Harry fit fast, or quickly thou shalt know,
How dang'rous 'tis to make the church thy foe.

SCENE VII. *A Street.*

Enter Justice Shallow and Master Slender.

Shal. Take me—take me this letter, I say, to Sir John Falstaff.—That is his suttl'ing-house. I will maul his cloak-bag of chitterlings with my rapier, as I may.

Slen. And will you fight him, cousin? Well, hang me if I carry the challenge. I never could abide the thoughts of cold iron. Even a key put down my back for a bloody note, ugh—ugh—ugh, would always set me a thundering.

Shal. Don't tell me—if the law will not get me my money, I'll be reveng'd of him. The tun-bellied knave shall not make such a fool of me. I will have his blood or my money.

Slen. His blood! O lud! O lud! Why, cousin Shallow, you are enough to—

Shal. Carry me this letter, I say, to Sir John Falstaff. What is it to you? If I am kill'd, you are my heir, and come in for my land and beeves. So do as I bid you.

Slen. Ecod, that's true. I did not think of that: if my cousin's kill'd, I come in for his estate. (*Aside*) Ay, ay, give it me, I'll carry him the challenge. Hey! here he comes, with his bottle-nos'd man, that pick'd my pocket.

Shal. Ay, he would pass without seeing us.

SCENE VIII. *Street continued.*

Enter Falstaff, and Bardolph.

Shal. Sir John! Sir John Falstaff!

Bar. Sir John, justice Shallow calls ye.

Fal. What would the blade of spear-mint have with me? I have done with him.

Shal.

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Shal. But I have not yet done with you, Sir John? I would first have my thousand pound of you again.

Fal. You would, master Shallow! like enough! You must take me then in the humour. I am at present ill-dispos'd to your suit.

Shal. Tut, Sir John. I have said I will not tamely put up this wrong. If I do, I shall be flouted and gib'd to death: I shall be pursued by the mockery of a whole hundred.

Fal. Not unlikely. But, believe me, the more you bustle in this business, the more you will expose yourself. The more you stir——you know the proverb, master Shallow, it is a little homely, so let that pass. Yet, let me advise thee; rest content.

Shal. Content! I am not content. I cannot be content. Nay, I will not be content. Give me back the money, or I will satisfaction of thee.

Fal. Satisfaction, sayst thou? Why thou wilt not dare me to the combat?

Shal. Such provocation would make a coward fight, Sir John.

Fal. If it make thee fight, I'll be sworn it would: for I have seen thee tremble at the shaking of a wheat-ear.

Shal. To be bamboozled! cheated! laughed at! I will not put it up. By heav'ns, I will not put it up.

Fal. Well said, master Shallow. Now I see there's mettle in thee. But surely thou wouldst not be the first to break the peace? thou whose office it is to punish the breach of it.

Shal. Sir John, there are times and reasons for all things. If you will neither give me my money nor gentleman's satisfaction, I will have thee tois'd in a blanket for a poltroon as thou art.

Fal. They must be stout carls, master Shallow, that tois me in a blanket.

Shal. Well, well, we shall see, I'll parley with you no longer. Cousin Slender don't stand still I, shall I, but give him the note.

Slen. Ay, ay, if coz. is kill'd, I shall have his estate; and so there's the challenge.

[*Exeunt Shallow and Slender.*]

SCENE

SCENE IX. *Continued.**Falstaff and Bardolph.*

Fal. A challenge! — By the Lord, and it is a challenge. I am call'd upon here to meet him at single rapier. Hoo! what a turluru! In the name of common-sense is the fool turn'd madman? What means the simple tony by this? To get his money again? Does he think by running me thro' the pericardium to become my heir at law? The fearful stag is at bay, and become desperate. But let me see—what's to be done here? I am in person too much of a knight to engage with so little a 'squire,—I have it.—Bardolph, I being your master and a knight, thou art by the laws of chivalry no less than a 'squire. Now, as I take it, this quarrel is properly thine: thou must meet justice Shallow at single rapier.

Bar. I, Sir John. He has no quarrel against me. The challenge is given to your honour.

Fal. True, but I tell thee my honour disdains to encounter a pitiful 'squire: thou must take my sword and fight him.

Bar. I shall only disgrace your arms, Sir John.

Fal. Go to, you will do well. He knows nothing of the sword; and should he challenge thee at pistols, put a charge into each barrel, and present thy nose at him: he will never stand thy fire.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John I must be excus'd. I never could fight in my life, unless there was something to be got by it; for a booty on the highway, or so.

Fal. Why 'tis for a thousand pound, you rogue.

Bar. And where's the money?

Fal. At my cashier's.

Bar. Well then, Sir John, why should we fight for it?

Fal. Bardolph, thou art a coward; but no matter. I have a thought: I will meet him myself. See that my buckler be well lin'd that I fought with at Shrewsbury.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE

SCENE X. *An Apartment.*

Enter Lord Scroop and the Earl of Cambridge.

Scroop. Now comes the season of commotion on.
The French ambassadors have had their audience,
And carry back defiance to their master.
The nettled Harry arms, mean-time, for France;
Inviting all the gallant youths of Britain,
To join his rashness in this expedition.

Cam. We must with him too.

Scroop. Curse on his favour: yes; he means, forsooth,
To do us honour.

Cam. Had we staid at home,
We might, perhaps, have seiz'd some fair occasion
To strike the crown off his usurping head,
And place it on the rightful brows of Mortimer.
The legate is already our staunch friend,
And France will aid our plot t'ensure success:
Yet still we cannot make our party strong.
While Harry keeps that eagle eye upon us,
At ev'ry step we stumble on suspicion.

Scroop. Why, if his eye offend thee, pluck it out.

Cam. Would he were out o' th' way.

Scroop. Canst thou not send him?

No time more opportune could have been wish'd,
Than when, full fledg'd and on the wing for France,
His troops embark'd, and all intent on conquest,
He means to follow. Might he not be sent
A longer journey than from hence to Normandy?

Cam. Whither?

Scroop. To heav'n.

Cam. Would he, indeed, were there.

Scroop. Couldst thou not strike a blow? a home one.

Cam. Ha!

Scroop. Could not thy poniard steal into his heart?

Cam. 'Twere better guided by some other hand.
In open fight I could encounter lions;
But bear no steady point i' th' trade of murder.

Scroop. In open fight! and wouldst thou covet hazard?

Who seeks thro' danger to obtain the end,

That

That may be reach'd without, may boast an heart ;
But gives strong proofs o' th' weakness of his head.

Cam. Scroop, I object not unto Harry's death ;
Nor to the safest means to cut him off :
I only would not be his executioner.

Who means to profit by the murd'ers work,
Should never bear the odium of his guilt.

Scroop. I did not mean you e'er should profit by't.
But fear makes blockheads cunning. [*Aside.*]
Cambridge, methinks thou shouldst be first to strike :
Whose is the cause, but Mortimer's and thine ?

Cam. And yet I will not be myself th' assassin :
It would be both impolitick and dangerous :
I wonder, Scroop, thy prudence sees it not.
Villains enow there are for such employ :
Had we not better hire some ruffian's poniard ;
One whose miscarriage might not even reach us ;
And yet, succeeding, on whose worthless head
The vengeance of the publick hate might fall ;
We seeming but the while to take th' advantage
Of such an accident to raise up Mortimer.

Scroop. Curse on't. Th' affair is thine : there's not a
villain

Money will bribe but will his int'rest find
As much in his betraying us.

Cam. I would not trust to interest alone :
But a deep-grounded hate and fix'd resentment
Against th' usurper's person may do much.

Scroop. Who bears him such good-will ?

Cam. The banish'd Falstaff ;
His late most hopeful tutor and companion ;
A finish'd villain !

Scroop. Yes, too much a villain.
Damn him he has not honesty enough.

Cam. If but his hatred's amply keen 'twill do :
And, if I'm well inform'd, you now will find him
For mischief ripe, and thirsty for revenge

Scroop. Harry hath treated him, indeed, but roughly ;
But all such dastard wretches can forgive.
Besides, they say he's but a blustering coward,
That wears his dagger only in his mouth.

Cam.

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Cam. Yes, he can stab. This, Scroop, is coward's work.

He hates young Harry, and with grounded reason;
I cannot think but, comes this talk a foot,
He's a most proper villain.

Scroop. I will sound him;
And as I find him fitting for our purpose,
Will seek to bind him fast unto our service.
Mean time, neglect not thou Sir Thomas Grey,
Who withes well to thee and to our cause.

Cam. I will not.

Scroop. Neither is it less expedient
To teach thy sword less honour and more safety.
Say Harry fails, three brothers yet remain;
And ere thyself, or Mortimer, succeed
The sons of Bolingbroke must freely bleed.

[Exeunt, severally.]

SCENE XI. *A Field. Enter Falstaff.*

Aha — Aha — What a vile mist there is abroad this evening! I cannot see a sword's length before me. This must be the spot. But where is our adversary? I would not have him, methinks, lost in the fog. Master Shallow! Master Shallow!

SCENE XII.

Enter Shallow, skirt for the Combat.

Shal. Ay, ay, Sir John, here am I.

Fal. Saints and good angels guard us! what is this?

Shal. Come, Sir John, draw, draw.

Fal. It calls me by my name too! *Jesu Maria!* It is no *deceptio visus*. In the name of heav'n and earth, what art thou? Ouphe, fairy, ghost, hobgoblin, or demon?
Exorciso te. — Pater noster —

Shal. Come, Sir John, don't think to put me from my purpose, you know me very well. You know justice Shallow to his cost.

Fal. How! can this thing be Robert Shallow of Gloucestershire, esq; justice of the peace, and of the quorum?

I took

FALSTAFF's WEDDING. 61

I took it for some strolling ghost escap'd out of purgatory, by all that's terrible.

Shal. Sir John, this mockery shall not suffice you.

Fal. Nay, it is true, as I am a sinner.

Shal. Will you fight me, Sir John, or will you not?

Fal. Fight thee! When thou seest the princely eagle descend to encounter with the tomtit. What! shall the lofty elephant wield his proboscis against a mite? Shall Sir John Falstaff draw his martial sword against such a pig-widgeon as thou?

Shal. What then did you come here for, Sir John? If you would not be treated as a coward, lay down your target, and draw.

Fal. Lay down my target, sayst thou? Who would be fool then? Look ye, master Shallow (since shallow thou wilt be) if I fight, it must be on equal terms. It is but equitable that my body should be secur'd, when I engage with an unsubstantial form; a thing that has none. Dost thou think me such a goose-cap as to lay open this fair round belly to the point of thy rapier, when thou presentest not a mark for me. It were as good as pricking at a lottery, ten thousand blanks to a prize, to make a thrust at thee. It were indeed more than a miracle to hit what, rhetorically speaking, is impalpable. But come, if thou must fight with me, thou shalt not say I deal unfairly by thee. To draw my sword would be needless: for hit thee I never shall.—That's flat. Therefore Toledo rest thou in thy scabbard. This is my ward. *(Stands on his defence with his target.)* Carry thy point as thou wilt: if thou canst not come into me before thou art weary, the money is mine; if thou dost, and woundest me, I will then—keep it to pay the surgeon. So, come on.

Shal. Sir John, you are a cowardly knave, and I will kill you if I can. *(They fight. Mr. Shallow thrusts at*

Sir John, who receives his point always on his target.

Fal. Well said, master Shallow. — Bravo! — To't again. —

Sa—Sa. *(Shallow breaks his sword, and Falstaff closes with him, and seizes him by the collar; on which Shallow falls down on his knees, and Falstaff claps the target on his head.)*

G

Ha!

62 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Ha! have I nabb'd you? You should have appointed sticklers, Mr. Shallow. What if I should cut thy throat now? *(Taking off the target.)*

Shal. Sir John, my life is in your hands: but you know you have wrong'd me.

Fal. Well then, thy wrongs be forgotten; and, on that condition, I give thee back thy forfeited life.

Shal. And I hope also you won't bear malice, Sir John, against me for the future.

Fal. By the Lord, not I. I do admire thy magnanimity and valour. Why, thou art the very mirror of prowess, and pink of 'squire errantry. John of Gaunt was a fool to thee. Were I a king thou shouldst, for this day's work, be made a knight with all the honours of chivalry. Nay, by our lady, I will take majesty upon me, and knight thee myself. Rise up, Sir Robert Shallow, knight of the most horrible order of combatants and murderers of the fifth button. And now, Sir Robert, if thou dost not think the title I've bestow'd on thee worth the thousand pound I owe thee; I give thee my word, that, when sack is cheap, and I have money to spare, I will think of thee; and so farewell, Sir Robert Shallow, knight. *[Exit Falstaff.]*

S C E N E XIII.

Shallow, plus.

The devil sure is in fee with this roisting bell-swagger. There is no good to be made of him any way. I find I must perforce sit me down contented, and bear my loss as I may. I hope nevertheless to see the rascal come to the gallows yet.

O were I sure that once would come to pass;
That he might pay for making me an ass!

A C T V. S C E N E I.

*An Apartment.**Enter Friar Paul and Eleanor Poins.*

Fri. **D**Aughter, 'twas indiscreet so long to hide
This rude behaviour of lord Scroop from me.

Ele. Alas, good father, 'twas for that I fear'd
He might increase the anger of the king.
Nor should I now have told your reverence ought,
But that I fear he means this very night
To do a violence, I dread to think of.

Fri. Rash man! impossible, he cannot mean it.
And yet I know not why, from time to time,
He hath put off the hour of your retreat.
Yet fear thou nought, myself will be your guardian
Until to-morrow, when thou shalt go hence,
And be no longer subject to his power.
By holy Paul, the king is much deceiv'd:
He never so would trifle with my character,
As it should seem, by this same lord, he doth.
But see he comes.—I and our brother Lawrence,
Who waits without, will take care to be near thee.
[Exit Friar.

S C E N E II. *Apartment continued.**Enter Lord Scroop.*

Scroop. Well, my hard-hearted fair, what cruel still?
Those icy looks would freeze me to the soul,
Did I not flatter me the glowing fires,
That warm my breast, will melt thee soon to love?
Why silent, love? and why this killing coldness?
Hast thou no sympathy, my gentle Nell?
Dead to th' embraces of a lover's arm,
You catch no spark of his consuming flame.

Elea. My lord, I beg you cease this persecution.

64 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Have I not oft assur'd thee, not the world
Should bribe my soul to such avow'd pollution ?

Scroop. Away with all this artifice. I tell you,
King Harry sets no value on your constancy.
Your prince, fair lady, 's wonderfully chang'd :
Nor is he more the gentle thing he was,
When he would skip about a harlot's chamber,
And act the page of ev'ry amoling nymph,
That pleas'd to send him on her gossip's errand.

Elea. I never knew him, lord, to very gen'le,
That very tame, unmanly thing you speak of:
But this I dare be confident to hope,
Howe'er his heart be chang'd respecting me,
He will do justice to his lowliest subject ;
Nor am I yet so destitute of means,
But my complaints may reach the royal ear.

Scroop. And dost thou brave me then, minx para-
mount ?

Know that I govern Harry as a child ;
Who thinks nor acts but as I tune his will.
Renounce thy scruples, therefore, at my pleasure ;
Or he shall give thee up to want and beggary.
Thou shalt not have withal to buy thee bread,
But earn it at the price of shame and wantonness.

Elea. Indeed, my lord, indeed——

Scroop. Nay, thou dost weep.

Come on—I will not chide thee—thou'lt be kind.
I come to take of thee a long farewell.
The king already's on his way for France.
I've but a few short moments to be blest ;
And then must speed me after.—To your chamber
Come, my fair Nell, or let me gently force thee.

Elea. Forbear, my lord, I pray, my lord, forbear.
Nay then I call for help.—What, help ! ho ! help !

SCENE III. *Apartment continued.*

Enter Friars Paul and Lawrence.

Fri. P. Hold, hold, my lord, this rudeness is too much.
I am the guardian of this lady's person ;
A charge deliver'd by the king himself ;
And will not bear to see her thus insulted.

Scroop.

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING. 65

Scroop. Thou busy priest, be straitway gone and leave us;

Or I will persecute thee to thy ruin.

Art thou th' old paramour of this same harlot?

Or play'st thou but the advocate of others;

Whose lustful blood boils fiercer than thine own?

If so, be gone, and know thine office better.

There is my purse—go wait, I say, without.

Fri. P. My lord, this mean abuse but ill becomes you.

But know, I will not go. My character

And innocence protect me: nor shall you

Stay, to repeat your insults on this fair one.

Scroop. Who shall prevent me?

[Offers to draw, but is hinder'd by friar Lawrence, who, standing behind, seizes his sword.]

Hell and vengeance! where—

Where are my servants?

Fri. P. I, my lord, dismiss'd them.

Scroop. Priests, you shall hear of this: shall loudly hear of it.

Give me my sword.

Fri. L. Not while you're thus impatient.

Fri. P. No; keep it. I will answer't to the king.

Scroop. Thou answer't to the king! thou paltry friar!

Fri. P. Yea, by my life and loyalty, I will:

Therefore my lord 'twere better you retire.

Scroop. I will, and to thy ruin, baudy priest.

Thou, harlot, art provided for, I see,

With these two brawny friars.—Thou shalt rue it.

[Exit Scroop.]

SCENE IV. *Apartment continued.*

Elea. Alas good father, what is't you have done?

I tremble for th' event. This pow'rful lord

Is all in all in royal Henry's favour.

Fri. P. Yet fear thou naught: tho' he were more than all,

I have that in my hand (*showing a letter*) shall make this lord

Yet less than nothing. He's an arrant traitor.

Just now a messenger enquir'd without

66 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

For the lord Scroop ; whose servants all dismiss'd,
The untuspicious fellow gave me this,
Beseeching i's delivery on th' instant.

But, as I thought it might relate to thee,
Unseen I broke it open ; when, good heav'n !
I found in't the suggestions of a traitor,
Plotting against our monarch's sacred life.

Elea. Against his life ! From whence ? O who hath
sent it ?

Fly, fly, this instant fly, and tell the danger.

Fri. P. I'll send immediate post unto the king.

Fri. L. But will not, brother, this rash lord return,
And wreak revenge on us, for what is past ?

Fri. P. He hath not here a moment's time of leisure :
I learn his majesty e'en now expects him
Down at Southampton. Hence, without delay,
He must to horse. Yet, to avoid mishap,
Go, brother Lawrence, and request a guard.
Which done, procure a messenger, with speed
To bear my letters to his majesty.
Daughter, in peace retire ; mean while I'll write,
And bring his lordship's honest deeds to light. [*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E V. At Southampton. An Apartment.

Enter Cambridge and Falstaff.

Fal. You know not perhaps, my lord, that I am lately
married ; and if this plotting business should turn out a
hanging matter, as in all likelihood it will, what will be-
come of my wife ? She will never get such another hus-
band.

Cam. (Aside.) Curse on this boggling villain. Would
we ne'er
Had trusted him : but now there is no remedy.

Fal. And yet, upon second thoughts, If I get into one
noose I shall slip my collar out of the other ; and so it may
be in the end, no great matter.

Cam. What hesitation, now ? to noble minds
How pleasant is the prospect of revenge !
Think Harry Monmouth treads thee under foot.

Fal. Hal hath indeed us'd me but scurvily. But here's
the point, my lord. I have most readily, on your persua-
sion,

sion, agreed to turn traitor, have enter'd into all your measures, and am come hither to Southampton, where my part of the matter is to be brought to conclusion. You are to get me introduc'd to the king, and, in revenge for his mal-treatment of me, and to pave the way for Mortimer to the throne, I am to introduce a dagger between the short ribs of majesty, and send his grace to heav'n.

Cam. Well, and why this vain recapitulation?

Have we not answer'd your objections yet?

Falstaff, I took thee for an honest villain,

That laugh'd at the impertinence of conscience.

If thou hast scruples, my lord cardinal

Will banish them, and give thee absolution.

Fal. My lord, I am no puritan. I am no bigot to the church. I would not give a fig for a pocket-full of my lord cardinal's absolutions: for I am, I confess, so much of a heretick, that I think, if a man cannot in his own conscience acquit himself, all the priests in Christendom cannot do it. Now, my lord, I should blame myself highly if I should run the risque of being damn'd for—

Cam. Henry's a tyrant; Mortimer is heir;
To free your country, and to right th' oppress'd,
Will evermore be deem'd heroick virtue.

Fal. I know, my lord, by the maxims of the church, a man will be sooner anathematiz'd for killing a hind, whom no body wants out of the way, than a king who stands unluckily in the gap of so many loyal princes. I do not pretend to enter into the validity of Harry's title: but, I know it is but the church's calling him a tyrant, and absolving his subjects of their allegiance, and all will go well. Give a dog an ill name, and hang him, my lord—

Cam. Ha! Sirrah, villain, dost thou mammer then?
I'll stab thee. By this light thou shalt not live, to—

Fal. Hold, hold, my lord, what, what, cannot you take a jest?

Cam. A jest, thou villain! is our business jesting?
Look to't—see you perform your promise roundly,
Or woe upon your life—winch e'er so little,
The hand is ready that shall rip thee up;
And tear thy coward conscience from thy heart.

Fal. 'Sblood, my lord, I have no conscience. But, as
I should have told you, wouldst thou have heard me, that
a man

68 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

a man would not willingly run the risk of being damn'd for nothing. You have, you know, made me large promises. You tell me I shall be made a duke, and shall have my share in the division of the promis'd land, when Mortimer is king. Not that I doubt of your lordship's honour, but conspirators are so liable to accidents; and, as I do not expect my reward in the next world, it is but prudent to secure it in this. Doubt not of my being true to your cause, but give me some earnest of my future recompense.

Cam. What will content thee? money thou hast had. What wouldst thou more that we can safely give? We'll put our lives no farther in your power, Tho' yours depends on our security.

Fal. Well, well, my lord, I must then be content to trust to the success of our enterprize, and leave it to your honour to proportion my reward to my services.

Cam. In that be sure thou shalt be satisfied. Mean time, go steel thy heart and whet thy poniard: That when the crisis comes thou may'st be ready, With hand and heart to prove thyself our friend.

[Exit Cambridge.]

SCENE VI. *Apartment continued.*

Falstaff, *solus.*

I shall consider on it.—Stab me, quoth he! he is by much too cholerick for a traitor. But he will say he is none, being engaged in the behalf of the legal heir.—That will be seen in the end; for those are ever the traitors, who come to the block or the gallows.—If Harry did not deserve to be damn'd for his ingratitude, it were as good a deed as to drink to turn true-man and impeach these conspirators. And yet there may be danger in that too. I must bethink me. But, who comes here? Oh, my lady wife! who has follow'd me here down to Hampton, to be introduc'd to the king, before he sets out for France. Should Harry take the other journey now, I shall be fairly rid of her importunities.

SCENE

SCENE VII. *Apartment continued.**Enter Lady Falstaff.*

L. F. Well, Sir John, and now you have brought me thus far; when shall I be introduced to his majesty?

Fal. I brought thee! my fair queen of Sheba! it was thy love that brought thee hither; thy love for the king, whose pretty sweet face thou hadst never seen. In troth I shall be jealous of thee, lady spouse.

L. F. You should have said curiosity, Sir John.

Fal. O, it is the same, in effect; love or curiosity will carry a woman without tiring to the world's end.

L. F. Ay my leman, but it is not the same thing, for all that.

Fal. Well, I will not dispute with thee about words. Thou shalt talk thy own way, if thou wilt act mine.

L. F. Why, Sir John, I'm sure my talk cannot offend. I am no rattle.

Fal. A cherry-clack in a high wind; that's all.

L. F. Go, go, Sir John, you are curst to day. I will leave ye: but mind I insist on our seeing his majesty, before he goes to France: and they tell me the troops are almost all embark'd.

Fal. Where goest thou, my pig'sneye?

L. F. To my maids, to be sure. [*Exit Lady Falstaff.*]

Fal. Ay, where thou mayst call names like a parrot, and chatter like a magpie. I will to my brother traitors, and see how mischief goes forward in the brewing.

[*Exit Sir John.*]

SCENE VIII. *The King's Apartments.**Enter King Henry and Duke of Exeter.*

King. These letters, sent in haste from father Paul,
Are strange of tenour, and of dread import;
No less than of a treasonable design,
Hatching against our person and our throne.

Ex. Good heav'n's preserve your majesty! by whom?

King. I say not that; for God forbid the truth
Should not bely this honest friar's suspicions:

For

70 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

For here he tells me that my seeming friend,
The man I've worn the nearest to my heart,
Is false as hell, and seeks my crown and life.

Exe. Means he the earl of Cambridge?

King. Why, good uncle?

Is he the only one I have distinguish'd?

Ex. No, my good liege, but that I've lately heard
Of his most frequent visits to the legate;
Who bears, I'm sure, your highness no good will,
Since last you taught him who was England's master.
Lord Cambridge has besides a strange deportment;
I cannot tell—but 'tis a man I like not.

King. And yet you never hinted this before.

Exe. Never, my liege; for heav'n forbid that aught
Of my loose fancy and mere wild conjecture
Should injure any man in your esteem:
I lightly hold my skill in physiognomy.

King. If such be your remarks, I not, good uncle.
But give me too your thoughts of baron Scroop.

Exe. My liege, I hold him for an honest man,
Discreet beyond his years, faithful and true,
And one that has your highness' good at heart.

King. Nay there you're out; or else the writer lies.
He tells me here lord Scroop's the very devil;
And now is plotting with the earl of Cambridge
To take away my life; and set the crown
Upon the head of Mortimer.

Exe. Is't possible!

How comes the friar by this information?

King. It seems he hath a letter intercepted,
Sent by the earl of Cambridge to lord Scroop,
Written in mystick characters, the which
His reverence had the cunning to decypher,
And is himself in person on the way,
To bring the letter, and explain its meaning.

Exe. The friar was ever held a godly man,
A learned and acute decypherer.
But the lord Scroop—well, so if it should prove,
I ne'er will judge again by fair appearances.
Will not your majesty arrest them straight,
Upon suspicion? 'twere, my liege, but prudent;
Who knows how ripe their devilish plot may be?

King.

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING. 71

King. Uncle, forewarn'd forearm'd. In very short
Th'informant will be here : let's wait 'till then.

If it no more should prove than vain suspicion,
I would not cast upon them such reproach ;
Nor soil their friendship with the doubts of treason.

Exe. Yet, the mean time, you will not sure give audience !

King. Why not, good uncle, yes, I've promis'd Cambridge

To grant a private audience to old Falstaff.
He hath, I'm told, begun a reformation,
He shall not lack our countenance therein.

Exe. Audience to Sir John Falstaff ! private too !
My liege, there may be danger in the conference.

King. Uncle, there may : and if I eat or drink,
Walk, sit, or stand, there may be danger too :
There's not the simplest action of our lives
But is attended with its share of danger.
I am not rash ; but yet I hold it base,
In fear of death, to live a slave to life.

No, uncle, though perchance I die to night,
Let me go through the business of to day :
Death cannot reach us in a happier hour
Than that in which it finds us in our duty.
Fear not, my uncle, providence will shield us ;
A guardian angel hovers round your king ;
And will protect him from the ruffian's poniard.
And for the rest—be it your care, good uncle,
To keep an eye on these suspected lords.
With speed and silence let our guards be doubled ;
And be my uncle York and brothers near us.

Exe. My liege, I will. But yet I fear this Falstaff.
Hath your grace heard of other reformation
Than what the earl of Cambridge hath suggested ?

King. I have, good uncle, ev'n from father Paul ;
Who said the knight was nigh to be well married.
Belike he needs our countenance herein.
If that our smiles will make our subjects good,
We'll not deny them to the meanest vassal.

Where are our brothers, and our uncle York ? [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE IX. *An Apartment.**Enter Lord Scroop and Cambridge.*

Scroop. Sir John hath now his lesson. Speed him forth
 When Harry falls, to horse, and spur away,
 With a choice party of light troops, to Mortimer,
 Conduct him hither with the utmost speed :
 His guards, surpriz'd, will stand not in resistance.
 Mean time, we'll seize the uncles and the brothers,
 As chief abettors of king Harry's murder.
 Nay, Falstaff shall declare they set him on,
 Or, by yon heav'n, we'll hang him Hainan's height.
 What troops are there embark'd ?

Cam. Ev'n all but those o'er which we have command ;
 And of Sir Thomas Grey, our loyal friend.

Scroop. That's well contriv'd. I left the legate busy,
 In raising monies, and fomenting treason.
 In ten days time half London will be ripe
 To spurn at sacrilegious Hal, and join us.
 But here's Sir Thomas Grey.

SCENE X. *Same Apartment continued.**Enter Sir Thomas Grey.*

Sir T. G. How now, my lords, why stay you loit'ring
 here ?

Is it not time Sir John should be at court ?

Scroop. It is yet time enough ; but th' hour moves
 slow,
 When expectation sits upon the watch.

Cam. Sir Thomas, your impatience binds you to us,
 As one whose heart is bent on our success.

Sir Tho. It is : but sure the time is drawing near ;
 The king has bidden Falstaff's free admittance ;
 But I have orders from the Duke of Exeter
 To double all the guards. What can that mean ?
 I hope there's no suspicion got abroad,
 Should Falstaff now impeach us, we are lost.

Cam. Ay, that indeed would be a fatal stroke :
 And, to say truth, I almost tremble for't.

Scroop. Cambridge, thou'rt ever wav'ring as the wind ;
 One

One moment rashly braving needful danger ;
 The next, suspicion making thee a coward.
 Impeach us ! let him, we will face him down ;
 Unsay whate'er he says, swear all is falsehood :
 Shall he gain credit 'gainst such men as we ?
 Fix'd, firm as rocks, we stand in Hal's esteem,
 The first and fairest for our loyalty ;
 And shall not we bear all before us down,
 The lying evidence of Sir John Falstaff ?
 Comes it to that—say nothing—leave 't to me.
 By heav'ns, I'll stare the fat-paunch'd coward dumb ;
 And, tho' he brought the gospel proof against us,
 Will make him own it ev'ry word a lye.
 The guards are doubled ! doubled let them be—
 They're under your command, Sir Thomas Grey,
 And we shall have the more for our assistance.

Sir Tho. But, if there be suspicion——

Scroop. Think there none.

They tell me, yesterday a drunken carl
 Attempted rudely to break into th' presence.
 My life for't 'tis on that account ; no other.
 But come, the hour's at hand : let us away.
 Mind well your cues, nor marr this buttling play :
 One short act more, and then the day's our own ;
 And Mortimer shall clap us, from the throne. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XI. *The King's Apartment.*

Enter King Henry and Falstaff.

King. 'Tis well, Sir John, and now what is the suit
 For which you have so earnestly requested
 Admittance to our person ?

Fal. My liege, you'll pardon me if I should fail in
 point of ceremony : it being so long since I stood on
 forms, that I have almost forgot the punctualities of good
 manners.

King. Then to your business.

Fal. My business is, my liege, principally to make
 your majesty an unworthy present.

King. A present ! needed there so much formality ;
 This intercession for thyself in person,
 To be the bearer of a paltry present ?

H

And

74 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

And to what end? think not on any terms
But those of thy repentance and amendment,
King Henry's favour ever can be purchas'd.

Fal. Nay, my liege, this present is not properly my own, nor indeed made with a view to my particular emolument. I am employ'd herein by certain great personages of your majesty's court; who, I imagine, were afraid, or ashamed, to present so improper an offering in their own persons.

King. Trifler! what is't?

Fal. A—dagger, my liege.

King. Ha!

Fal. (*Kneeling.*) See, here it is. (*presents it to the King, and rises.*) Your majesty will doubtless pardon me, that I fail in so material a part of my commission, as that of lodging it deep in your left breast.

King. What traitor can have sent thee upon this,
So horrible a business?

Fal. The earl of Cambridge, Scroop, and Thomas Grey, your majesty's most loyal friends.

King. Good heav'n! I see 'tis true. Thou, father Paul, hast construed right their traitorous correspondence.
But I will sound these hollow friends to th' bottom.

Falstaff, if this be true, I live to thank thee;
But it behoves we should have further proof:
If thou art honest, thou wilt stand the test,
And face these peers, thou dar'st to brand with treason.

Fal. Your grace will take me in your high protection,
And I will prove it on them, to their beards.

King. Fear naught—I will return to thee on th' instant.

[*Exit King.*]

SCENE II. *Apartment continued.*

Falstaff solus.

Now, my fine lords of Cambridge and of Masham, I think I'm even with you—I overheard them condemn me to the gallows. The monkeys would make a cat's paw of me, I see. They would have me commit murder for their sake and hang me for it when I have done. In troth these spring-peers, with their quick wits, are little better than asses after all. They confide in me, truly, because they

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING. 75

they think I am a villain. Were it not a pity they should not find me so? they will no doubt deny this matter stoutly : but I've their letters, if my words be doubted ; besides the circumstances I could——

SCENE XIII. *Apartment continued.*

Enter King Henry, with the Duke of York, the three young Princes and Attendants.

King. Call in my uncle Exeter. Where's Scroop and Cambridge?

Lord. In th' antechamber, with Sir Thomas Grey.

King. Enough——what ho! the guards—the guards, I say.

SCENE XIV. *Apartment continued.*

(Enter at one Door the Duke of Exeter and Guards : at the other Lord Scroop, Cambridge, Sir Thomas Grey, with their Swords drawn. They make up to the young Princes, as if to seize them : but start back on seeing the King.)

Scroop. Seize—Seize the traitors there—arrest them all.

King. Who are they, lords? put up, here is but one.

Cam. All's lost. *(Aside.)*

Grey. All's ruin'd. *(Aside.)*

Scroop. May heav'n preserve your majesty ; we fear'd Some dangerous treason at the cry of guards ; And therefore rush'd thus arm'd into your presence.

King. My lords, I thank ye ; and in right good time Ye come, to vindicate your noble characters Against th' aspersion of this villain traitor ; Who, with a bloody and malicious purpose, Came here to seek our life : but, failing there, In that I wrested from him this same poniard, He dares, with matchless and assured countenance, Charge you, my lords, and you, Sir Thomas Grey ; My best, my nearest, dearest, worthiest friends, With being vile abettors of his treason. My lords, you speak not.—Yet I do not wonder ; Ye are struck dumb with horror and amazement : For what consummate villainy is that

76 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Which can suggest men so resemble devils,
That they can wear an angel's outward form,
And yet be black at heart as hell itself?

What shall be done, my lords, with this vile monster?

Scroop. Thou hoary villain! thou ungrateful traitor!

Was it for this I fought unto his highness
To have some pity on thy bending age,
And take thee back again to grace and favour?
Is this the fair return thou mak'st my kindness?
By heav'n, wer't not in presence of the king,
I would this instant pluck thee by the beard,
And stab thee to the heart.—My sov'reign liege,
So dear I hold your highness' sacred person,
That, for this execrably vile attempt,
I think this horrid wretch should straight be sentenc'd,
And executed without farther question.

King. And yet, my lord, the busy prating world,
For ever envious of the good man's fame,
Might whisper still what his vile breath hath utter'd.
No, my good friends, ye shall be fully clear'd.
This wretch shall shew at length, before the world,
That what he has avow'd is false: for true
It cannot be. What, traitor, canst thou offer,
To prove your charge against these noble lords?

Fal. My liege, by good luck have I here two letters,
Sent by these lords to me, upon this business:
The writing theirs, their signets too preserv'd.

(Gives the letters to the King.)

Scroop. What! forgery too! hath heav'n no thunder
left

To strike this precious villain?

Fal. By heav'n's, a noble actor! 'tis a pity he was not
bred to th' stage.

Scroop. Cambridge! why, man your quiv'ring lip be-
trays you.

Cam. It is in vain: let us at once confess.

Scroop. Confess! damnation! hush — hush for your
life.

King. Look here, my lords, are these your signatures?

Scroop. Flat forgery! and yet, good heavens, how
like!

King.

King. What art there is in diabolick natures!
But if such things as these obtain i' th' world,
Not angel innocence on earth is safe.

Fal. My liege, it is no forgery; I can dare them to
the proof.

Scroop. Dare us, thou traitor! thou must find the
proof.

But tell us here, before our sov'reign's face,
If thou hast sold thy self to hell for this,
What devil furnish'd thee with seal and characters
So much resembling mine?

Fal. If they're not yours, it was, indeed, the devil
in likeness of yourself.

King. This is too much: what in our presence thus
To vent this insolence! Take him away.

Fal. Good, my liege.

King. Guards take him hence. (*Falstaff exit guarded.*)

——— And now, my worthy lords,

Altho' I clearly see this traitor's purpose,
I hold it meet, that on this accusation,
You and our friend Sir Thomas Gray submit
To have your innocence clear'd up in form.
This traitor doubtless hath accomplices;
We'll publish instantly reward and pardon
For their discovery.

Scroop. I hope your majesty
Hath not a doubt, as touching our allegiance.

King. My lord, I know your worth too well, to doubt
it:

And also yours, lord Cambridge, and Sir Gray:
Yet, to appear impartial to the world,
And stop the mouth of ev'ry future censure;
Ye must be well contented, for a while,
To bear ye as arrested for high treason.
We will a while delay our embarkation,
To bring this matter to immediate issue:
So when th' accuser's falsehood be made known,
Ye shall come forth again, like gold refin'd,
By so much brighter as severe your trial.
By heav'n, I'd sooner lose my own right hand
Than any true and loyal heart that's here

78 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

Should suffer by the practices of treason.

Uncle, a guard.—Ye now, good sirs, are prisoners.

(The conspirators deliver up their Swords.)

Scroop. Confiding in your highness' sacred word,
We thus obey your pleasure; nothing doubting
But from your majesty we shall have justice.

(Scroop, Cambridge and Grey are led off.)

SCENE XV. *Apartment continued.*

King. Doubt it not. Yes, ye shall have ample justice.
Why that vile Mafham is deceit itself.

I thought I should have sham'd him to confession:

But he is proof I see 'gainst all remorse.

Are these the asps I've cherish'd in my breast

And warn'd to life to thank me with their stings!

Go, uncle Exeter, and see them safe. *[Exit Exeter.]*

My brother Gloucester, thou, to Sir John Falstaff;

And promise him our favour and protection.

Glo. Falstaff, my liege, the slave who fought your
life?

King. That, my good brother, was indeed his errand;

Hir'd to that end by Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey:

But he, tho' nothing but an outcast robber,

One that I banish'd for his vicious courses,

Yet how much better than these bosom friends!

He, brother Gloucester, play'd the villains false,

And told me all their purpose. Bring him hither.

[Exit Gloucester.]

[Enter a Page.]

Page. My liege, a reverend friar, post haste from
London,

Desires admittance to your majesty.

King. 'Tis father Paul: conduct him in.

[Enter Friar Paul.]

Good father Paul, thrice welcome to Southampton.

We thank thee for th' advices thou hast sent us.

Thy love and zeal shall not go unrepaid.

Friar. My liege, if ought my poor abilities
Can serve your majesty, I'm bound in duty;
And in those services am well repaid.

King.

FALSTAFF'S WEDDING. 79

King. Friar, we thank thee. Thou hast brought that scrowl,

Of which thou gav'st us notice in thy letters.

Friar. I have, my liege, and with your gracious leave, I would unfold the characters before you ; And show your majesty whereon I grounded. My information 'gainst the censur'd peers.

King. Another time we'll listen to 't at large : But providence in their own toils hath caught 'em, And there remains no doubt of their defection.

Friar. Be all such traitors timely thus betray'd.

King. Give us the scroll. We'll see how this will work. My uncle York, go fetch the traitors in. [*Exit York.* Heav'n's what a worthy seeming wore these men ! How smooth a face of innocence and loyalty ! All-gracious Providence, what thanks are due To thy preventing pow'r for our deliv'rance !

SCENE XVI. *Apartment continued.*

Enter York, with the conspirators guarded.

King. My lords, I hope you're arm'd, in your defence, With proofs as strong as those of your accusers : For, whatsoever love I bear your persons, I cannot wrest th' impartial hand of justice. The character of Falstaff was suspicious ; But here's a man, I'm sorry, Sirs, to find, Joins also in suspecting you of treason.

Scroop. (*Aside.*) How, father Paul ! what dæmon sent him here ?

King. My lord of Cambridge, know'st thou of this letter ?

Look at it well, and mark the characters. Perhaps lord Scroop too can decypher them.

Scroop. Ha !

Cam. Yes, I see the hand of Heav'n is over us. [*Aside.* I do, my liege, and thus upon my knees Confess, and plead for mercy. [*Cambridge and Grey kneel.*

Sir T. Grey. And I.

Scroop. Fire and furies ! What is that scrowl, my liege ? I know it not.

King. Lord Scroop, I see thou'lt braye it to the last.

I do

80 FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

I do believe thou know'st not much of this ;
This friar, it seems, made bold to intercept it.

Scroop. Curse on the meddling priest, and thee, the
fool, [To Cambridge.

That sent thy blunderers on such an errand.

Nay, since all's lost, I'll boast the treason too.

King. Thou more than savage, most inhuman Scroop—

Scroop. Nay, chide not, king, I heed not thy reproaches.

I ask no mercy ; for I know thou'lt have none ;

Thou'rt fortune's minion, and my head is thine.

Take 't when thou wilt—my folly has undone me.

This son of York (ten thousand curses on him.)——

Cam. I do repent me : 'twas indeed my cause,
And would my life alone could pay the forfeit.

Scroop. Thy cause! thou grov'ling peer! and dost
thou think

I meant to raise up Mortimer or thee ?

No, ye were only tools to my ambition,

That soar'd an higher pitch. Think not, king Henry,

In hate of thee, I sought thy crown and life ;

Or that the love I bore the house of York,

Taught me to mix with such vile heartless traitors.

No : for myself alone I sought the crown.

Cam. On what pretensions ? thou !

Scroop. Go ask thy wife,

Whom thou mayst thank, when coming to the block,

If e'er thou find'st thy way from thence to heav'n.

Cam. My wife ! O villain !

King. Lead the traitors hence,

And yield them to the justice of our laws.

Where's Sir John Falstaff ? (Conspirators are led off.

Lord. Here, my liege, he comes,
With th' duke of York,

[Enter Duke of York and Falstaff.]

King. Sir John, your former ills

Your later act of loyalty hath cancell'd :

And, as we hear you promise better things

Than the loose conduct of your former days,

As a new man we take thee to our favour.

Fal. I thank your gracious majesty most humbly.

King.

King. Nor do we less respect the ties of gratitude:
Ask what thou wilt, we will repay thy service.

Fal. My liege, the love I bear your gracious person, would excite me to follow you to these same wars; but, as I'm married and grown something round, I'm little fit to cope with raw-bon'd Frenchmen; or shine again i' th' bloody fields of Mars. My former deeds in arms your highness knows: and I know too you hold them cheap enough: I hope it will not therefore be thought cowardly in me, if, while the other gallant youth of Britain are reaping laurels in the heart of France, I am content to kiss dame peace at home. Your majesty will please to order me from your Exchequer a competency to support the infirmities of nature, and the dignity of knighthood. *Otium cum dignitate*, my liege.—Would your majesty secure me this, I would make my peace with the world, and live or die as Heav'n sees best, and my wife will let me.

King. Thou hast thy wish; and now, my noble lords,
Let us prepare for France: first solemn thanks
In all our churches paid for our deliv'rance.
The hand of Heav'n, thus manifestly shown
In this our preservation, bids us hope
Success will crown our enterprize.

Exe. And proves, my liege, the justice of that cause,
Which Heav'n, in thee, hath taken in protection.

King. Right well observ'd, good Uncle Exeter.
Who boasts a rightful cause, come what come may,
Arm'd for th' adventure of the roughest day,
By justice sanctified, his sword and shield,
May dare the perils of the bloodiest field,
Boldly in providence may put his trust;
Heav'n is our champion when our cause is just.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*]

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